ALTERNATIVE ELEPHANT TOURISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM THAILAND

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Acknowledgments

There are a number of people without whom this project would not have been possible however, any errors in the finished work remain entirely my own.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of peoples' encounters with elephants in an elephant sanctuary in Thailand with a volunteer tourism opportunity, and the exchanges that take place between people and the sanctuary through the sanctuary's Facebook posts. Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines participant observation at the locale of the sanctuary, and observation of comments on the sanctuary's Facebook posts, this thesis attempts to conduct a multispecies ethnography in both physical and virtual spaces to understand the meanings of elephant encounters and narratives about elephants for people, to understand peoples' experiences of wonder and fascination with elephants, and to reveal their perceptions of elephants. Situated in the emerging field of *ethnoelephantology*, this project draws on a number of disciplines to conceptualise the sanctuary as a networked community, as both a physical sanctuary for elephants and a virtual sanctuary for people, and as the site of a complex affect economy in which humans and elephants affect each others' lives.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In Asia, humans and elephants have lived closely together for somewhere between c3,500 (Kurt & Garai, 2007, p. 1) and 5,000 years (Ringis, 1996, p. 11) though the earliest example of writing about elephants in Thailand is a stone inscription on an obelisk which dates from 1292 and tells of King Ramkamhaeng's use of elephants in combat (Lair, 1997, p. 211; Ringis, 1996, p. 61; Schliesinger, 2010, p. 26). These days tame elephants are predominantly employed in the tourism industry, which provides a number of different ways that tourists can interact with elephants.

The research for this thesis was conducted in an elephant sanctuary in Thailand that was established to provide a home for tamed[1] elephants, and online on the sanctuary's Facebook page. The sanctuary's founder, Elizabeth, moved to Thailand following her own experiences volunteering with elephants. Many of the sanctuary's elephants[2] have previously had careers in the tourism and logging industries, and a number of them have sustained injuries in their previous work or are retired elderly elephants. A small number of guests can be accommodated at the sanctuary, usually staying for 3-5 nights, and participating in sanctuary activities as volunteers.

In this thesis I aim to introduce ways of looking at the intersections between alternative elephant tourism and the development of a strong network of Facebook supporters by looking at the emotional, and financial relationships between the sanctuary, their elephants, their guests, and their Facebook followers. The research included a period of fieldwork at the sanctuary to learn about the workings of the sanctuary, and understand guest experiences of visiting the sanctuary and encountering elephants. This was followed by observing public posts on the sanctuary's Facebook page and analysing how Facebook users responded to, and interacted with, information and stories about elephants shared online which revealed practices and beliefs around grieving for, rescuing, celebrating, and caring for elephants.

In the introduction, I offer an overview of the theoretical frameworks that are drawn upon in this project: multispecies ethnography and *ethnoelephantology*

[1] The terms 'tame', 'tamed', 'domestic', and 'domesticated' are problematic in relation to elephants and this is discussed in more detail in a later section of this introduction.
[2] At the time of conducting fieldwork there were twelve elephants residing at the sanctuary.

(Locke, 2013). This is followed by an outline of the situation for tame elephants in Thailand, with a particular focus on the challenges faced by tamed elephants, in order to explain the environment that the sanctuary exist in. As the majority of the sanctuary's supporters are from Western countries (most of the sanctuary's supporters are from the United States and the United Kingdom), I have included a brief overview of western relationships with elephants through history. I also introduce concepts of domesticity and the 'use values' of elephants, as well as an outlining ideas about affect and emotion referred to in the study.

Chapter two describes the methodology for the study which employed a mixed-methods approach that combined participant observation at the locale of the sanctuary, with observation of the responses to the sanctuary's Facebook posts. This includes description of the limitations of the methods employed, challenges faced during the data collection period, and ethical considerations. The third chapter begins with a discussion of alternative tourism, voluntourism, and eco-tourism. It goes on to detail my fieldwork experiences and explains how the sanctuary's tourism model and elephant-management style define it as alternative tourism. This chapter also introduces three groups of human participants who were guests at the sanctuary during the course of my fieldwork, as well as a number of the sanctuary's elephants. It further introduces the themes of wildlife encounters and story-telling for the production of emotion. This is followed by a chapter that discusses the literature on *affordances* (Gibson, 1986) and challenges for organisations, particularly not-for-profit organisations, in using social media, and relates this to the sanctuary's experiences of using Facebook. Chapter five is broken into six parts, five of which analyse the responses to different topics or types of Facebook post that were posted by the sanctuary. Part one discusses experiences of grieving for elephants online and part two discusses celebration for, and care of new elephant arrivals at the sanctuary, as well as expressions of wonder and fascination at elephant interactions. Part three describes examples of popular topics including popular elephants, and veterinary care extending the theme of caring for elephants. Part Four includes examples of posts about daily life for the elephants at the sanctuary and their significance for understanding the meaning of sanctuary. Part five describes posts that receive comparatively less attention from Facebook users, which are usually non-elephant focused posts about such things as infrastructure development in the sanctuary. This is followed by discussion of the recurring themes across different post

types which focuses on feelings of gratitude to the sanctuary for the work that they do and the idea of Facebook interactions and financial donations as being part of a gift exchange. This section also looks at engagement with the sanctuary's story-telling techniques, and what the data reveals about sanctuary followers' attitudes towards elephants and elephant-welfare. Furthermore it examines the ways in which people anthropomorphise and revere elephants and describes the ways in which people perceive elephants as having personhood or being better-than-human. Finally, the conclusion attempts to describe what is meant by 'sanctuary' as more than a physical space for elephants, and why being part of a networked community of elephant supporters is meaningful for people. It also describes the value of story-telling about elephants for building engagement and forming emotional attachment to elephants and discusses ideas about elephant biographies. The conclusion finishes with an outline of this project's contribution to the field of *ethnoelephantology* and identification of possible future research endeavours.

Multispecies Ethnography, Animal Agency, and *Ethnoelephantology*

Multispecies Ethnography

This thesis draws on principles from multispecies ethnography, and the emerging field of *ethnoelephantology* (Locke, 2013) to discover the ways in which humans and elephants influence each other through the sanctuary's physical and virtual spaces. Multispecies ethnography is a relatively new approach in anthropology that extends anthropology from being primarily concerned with the human, and examines the interconnectedness between humans and other organisms. Kirksey and Helmreich (2010, p. 545) explain that: "Multispecies ethnography centers on how a multitude of organisms' livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic and cultural forces". Agustín Fuentes, for example, describes his study of Balinese long-tailed macaques and people in a temple complex and forest as a "multispecies interface...in which the two species are simultaneously actors and participants in sharing and shaping mutual ecologies" (Fuentes, 2010, p. 600). Multispecies ethnography also draws on Eduardo Kohn's (2007, p. 5) notion of an "Anthropology of life" which demands a broader view of the study of humans that is not limited to analytic categories of society, culture, language and history, but

instead examines what can be understood about humans by studying human interactions with other species. Ogden, Hall, and Tanita (2013, p. 6) further describe multispecies ethnography as "a project that seeks to understand the world as materially real, partially knowable, multicultured and multinatured, magical, and emergent through the contingent relations of multiple beings and entities."

Multispecies ethnography differs from previous research into the relationships between humans, nonhuman animals and other organisms in that it extends the study of these relationships to examine the *becomings* of humans through relations with other organisms (Ogden et al., 2013, pp. 5-6). Kirksey and Helmreich (2010, p. 546) define *becomings* as "new kinds of relations emerging from nonhierarchical alliances, symbiotic attachments, and the mingling of creative agents". These relations constitute multispecies *assemblages* (*assemblage* is a rough translation of the French word *agencement* used by the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari to mean arrangements, fittings, or fixings (Phillips, 2006, pp. 108-109)) in which properties of the collective are greater than the properties of its component parts (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 7). Related to the concepts of *becoming* and *assemblage* is Despret's (2004, p. 131) use of the phrase 'with-ness' for which she provides an example of the relationship between a human called Lorenz and an adopted goose. Through domesticating a goose, Lorenz becomes a human "with a goose-with a human" and likewise the goose becomes "with a human" and through "being-with", Lorenz and the goose can be mutually affected (Despret, 2004, p. 131).

Wise (2012, p. 159. 162) incorporates concepts of *assemblage* into the study of communication devices and technologies - an *assemblage* that he calls the 'clickable world', and further argues that attention is also a component form in this *assemblage.* Wise adds that *assemblages* can involve stratum of corporeal and incorporeal agency (p.160) and in this thesis, I argue that an *assemblage* in which communication technologies are a component can form *becomings* through facilitating emotional engagement with or towards other beings without necessarily sharing, or having shared, physical space, and in which some members of the *assemblage,* in this case elephants, are represented by others. Multispecies ethnography need not be restricted to physical spaces as Lestel and Taylor (2013, p. 184) state: "The question is not that of knowing how I share my life with others, but how others shape me and how I shape others, which differs markedly." Indeed, the advent of the internet now makes it possible to shape lives and be shaped by others

without necessarily living with others. Furthermore, this study will show that followers of the sanctuary purposely seek to shape the lives of the sanctuary's elephants and be shaped by them in return.

Animal Agency

Carter and Charles (2013, p. 323) argue that there is some difficulty in academia in agreeing a definition of "agency". From an anthropocentric, humanist perspective, Hewson (2010, p. 2) describes agency as "...the condition of activity rather than passivity. It refers to the experience of acting, doing things, making things happen, exerting power, being a subject of events, or controlling things." However, characteristic of posthumanist thought which underpins multispecies ethnography is that agency is not restricted to humans, or even necessarily living organisms. Animal agency is being explored in a range of disciplines including two noteworthy examples of the study of animal agency in history. Hribal (2007, p. 102) describes how animals have shaped social change from the analytical viewpoint of 'history from below' and defines agency as "the minorities' ability to influence their own lives —i.e. the ability of the cow to influence and guide her own life." Hribal further argues that it is not enough for scholars to theorise animal agency in what he calls the 'view from above', but they have to prove it. (Hribal, 2007, p. 102). Such evidence of animal agency is often exhibited through animals' resistance such as refusal to follow commands or escaping (Hribal, 2007, p. 103). The notion of resistance as evidence of animal agency is argued for further in two examples described by Carter and Charles (2013). The first is the escape of two pigs enroute to slaughter, and another is lab rats that resist being handled. Carter and Charles (2013, pp. 334-335) add that while animals have agency, it is limited to individual agency and they lack 'corporate agency' to change power relations. These arguments are also found in Susan Nance's (2013, pp. 9-10) history of early American circus elephants, in which she describes elephants as having agency as sentient beings but lacking power in the human social and cultural construct that they had become part of. The agency of circus elephants in Nance's history is also evident through resistance as some individual elephants rebelled against the conditions of their captivity resulting in conflict (and sometimes fatalities) between humans and elephants (Nance, 2013, pp. 175-207).

Ethnoelephantology

The dualisms of the humanist philosophical tradition, Locke (2013, p. 82) explains, have also been responsible for channelling western thought into 'disciplinary silos'. In proposing *ethnoelephantology*, based on *ethnoprimatology,* as a field of study, Locke advocates not only for critical consideration of how the dualisms of humanist thought have limited thought, research and analysis, but also for breaking down the disciplinary silos they created through the development of intra and inter-disciplinary approaches to understanding human-elephant entanglements that combine methodologies from social and natural sciences (Locke, 2013, p. 80). To date, human-elephant relations have been studied through the lenses of archaeology, history, religious studies, political science, geography, anthropology, psychology, ecology and veterinary science, but scholars are increasingly conducting research that crosses disciplinary boundaries (Locke, 2013, pp. 81-82).[3] Central to Locke's formation of *ethnoelephantology* is that given the similarities between human and elephant social and cognitive complexities, it is unsurprising that relationships have been formed between the two species (Locke, 2013, p. 80). This research project, situated in *ethnoelephantology,* draws on socio-cultural anthropology, media studies, and tourism studies to demonstrate the application of a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding one case study of an elephant-keeping organisation in Thailand.

Asian Elephants in Thailand

Often writings on tame Asian elephants offer descriptions of ways in which humans have interacted with elephants in Asia the past including as vehicles of war, forestry labourers, transport, symbols of magisterial strength and authority, food, trekking animals, competitors for food and space, and entertainers (see for examples Locke, 2016, p.160 and Sukumar, 2016). Elephants have played an important symbolic role in Buddhism in Thailand[4]. In particular the symbol of Erawan the mighty white

[3] In *Gone Astray,* Lair (1997, p. 217) argues that multi-disciplinary approaches to solving problems for tamed elephants in Thailand are necessary due to the complexity of their situations and the number of different organisations involved in their care and administration.
[4] See also, Klixbull's (2016, p.207) description of the symbolism of the elephant in Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

elephant ridden by the god Indra[5] features significantly in Thai art and in the design of architectural features and town planning of Bangkok (Ringis, 1996, p. 19). Ringis suggests that the reason many artefacts containing images of elephants have survived the ravages of time and a humid climate is because of the care with which they have been treated due to their expression of religious beliefs (Ringis, 1996, p. 122). The elephant also serves as a Thai national symbol and a white elephant was featured on Thailand's national flag until 1917 (Lair, 1997, p. 211; Ringis, 1996, p. 93).

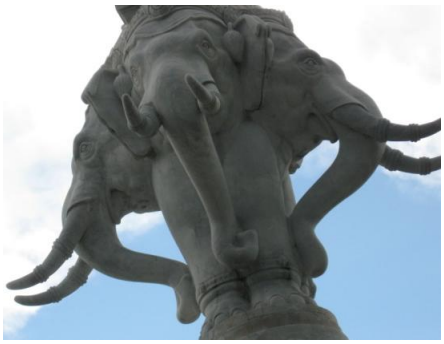

Fig.1: Statue of Erawan, Bangkok. .
(Photograph: Samantha Eason)

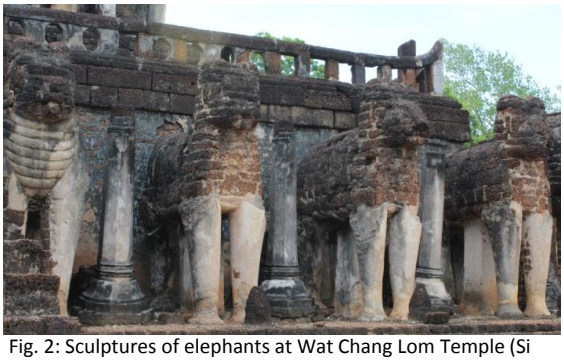

Fig. 2: Sculptures of elephants at Wat Chang Lom Temple (Si Satchanalai)
(Photograph: Samantha Eason)

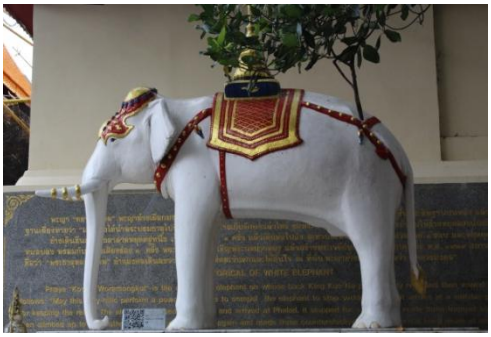

Fig.3: White Elephant Shrine at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, Doi Suthep Temple (Chiang Mai).
(Photograph: Samantha Eason)

Fig.4: Detail of engraved pillar at Wat Phra That Temple (Chiang Mai).
(Photograph: Samantha Eason)

At the turn of the 20th century, the tamed and wild elephant populations of Thailand each numbered approximately 100,000 (Singh, 2002, p. 1; Tipprasert, 2002, p. 157) but as of 2010, there were approximately 2000 tame and another 1000 wild elephants in Thailand (Duffy & Moore, 2010, p. 754).Elephants have been domesticated at a higher rate in Thailand than in other countries in Asia and, despite the declining population, Thailand has sold more elephants to foreign countries,

[5] Indra's origins are found in Indian Hinduism though Indra and Erawan (known as Airavata in Hinduism) have been adapted and integrated into Thai Buddhism (Ringis, 1996, p. 19).

(particularly from the 1950s to the 1970s) than any other country in Asia (Sukumar, 2011, p. 256).

Up until 1989, the vast majority of Thailand's tamed elephants were employed in the logging industry. A devastating series of landslides triggered by a storm in 1988 (DeGraff, 1990), were believed to be caused by significant deforestation, and led to an almost overnight end to logging via an emergency decree (Laohachaiboon, 2010, p. 77). This meant that over 60% of Thailand's logging elephants and their mahouts were unemployed with almost immediate effect (Laohachaiboon, 2010, p. 78). Needing to make a living, many mahouts and their elephants turned to street-begging, posing safety risks to both elephants and people (Tipprasert, 2002, p. 157). Cohen (2009, p. 115) argues that as the Thai tourism industry (both foreign and domestic) has grown and natural habitats have declined as a result of rapid development, "contrived" settings for seeing wildlife in Thailand (for example, zoos and animal shows) have been established as opposed to more "natural" settings. In mainstream tourism, contrived settings for seeing elephants involve elephant performances and trekking in *howdahs* (chairs strapped to the elephant's back) (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2008, p. 2). Foreign tourists, particularly from other countries in Asia, are the main audience of animal shows and elephant shows are very popular because of, Cohen (2009, pp. 112-113) hypothesises, the humour that comes from the apparent humanisation of the elephant through making them perform human activities such as playing sports.

The rise of elephant tourism has also been accompanied by an increased awareness of elephant welfare issues. In 1993, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) received 372 complaints from tourists about treatment of elephants (Lair, 1997, p. 191). By 2008, the TAT received approximately two written complaints about elephant welfare each month, and daily verbal complaints (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2008, p. 11). The Thai media also has played an increasingly important role in raising awareness of conservation and welfare issues amongst the Thai people, and elephant births and deaths have become newsworthy events in Thailand (Lair, 1997, pp. 165-166). Despite the role of the elephant in Thai religion, history and tradition, Lair wrote in 1997 that young Thais have very little knowledge of elephants, and urban, middle-class Thais share similar concerns to westerners about elephant welfare and conservation - not motivated so much by religious or cultural values but by sympathy for elephants (Lair, 1997, p. 211).

Challenges to elephant welfare in the growing tourism industry, include practical problems of providing sufficient food and clearing large amounts of elephant dung (Tipprasert, 2002, p. 157), as well as insufficient veterinary care (Lair (1997, pp. 192-195). Captive elephants have, in general, experienced a higher incidence of infectious diseases compared to their wild counterparts, as well as foot problems, skin sores, sunburn, obesity, and digestive issues caused by poor diet (Barnett, 1991, pp. 104-105). Elephants living in close proximity with humans can also be at higher risk of catching tuberculosis from infected humans (Mikota *et al* 2006a and 2006b in Mikota, 2008, p8).

Between 2005 and 2008, the Mobile Elephant Clinic in Thailand treated approximately 40% of the tame elephant population for illness or injury most often related to their work (Ankawanish et al., 2009, p. 16). The use of elephants in tourism has also led to concerns about harsh training methods hindering elephants' social development (D. A. Fennell, 2012, p. 109) as well as early weaning and the keeping of solitary calves (Lair, 1997, pp. 205-206). The practice of 'domesticating' or 'taming' young elephants by a method called *phajaan* or "the crush" has typically involved the use of physical force and has attracted widespread criticism (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2008, p. 7; Laohachaiboon, 2010, pp. 85-86). Once tamed, elephants may continue to be controlled by chains, bullhooks, and other practices that are regarded by critics as cruel. Some animal welfare organisations see the use of the bull hook as an act of cruelty whereas some Thai elephant keepers explain that they are only used when necessary to prevent harm (Duffy & Moore, 2011, p. 598). In a fairly recent interview, Richard Lair argued that the media plays a role in shaping opinions about cruelty to elephants by seeking out stories with villains, whereas he believes that there is no problem with properly used hooks and chains, or managed elephant rides for a limited amount of time carrying a limited amount of weight (Richard Lair, interview, 24 June 2015).

In many cases, the challenges faced by elephants also reflect the challenging circumstances faced by their mahouts. Mahouts have typically come from low socio-economic circumstances and traditional elephant-keeping skills continue to decline as younger generations are choosing alternative careers rather than following the family tradition of mahoutship (Lair, 1997, pp. 209-211; Schliesinger, 2010, p. 14). The previous role of the knowledgeable mahout-owner is being phased out and replaced with a commercial relationship in which elephants

may be owned by individuals or companies with little knowledge of elephant care and management (Schliesinger, 2010, p. 14). Despite the welfare issues in elephant tourism, Kontogeorgopoulos (2008, p. 10) concludes from conducting interviews with a range of stakeholders, that tamed elephants are better off in the main stream tourism industry where they have value, than if they were to be unemployed. When tourism slows down, as it did during a widespread outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in the early 2000's, the economic value of elephants drops (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2008, p. 10) highlighting the status of the tourism elephant as a commodity. This point was reinforced by Richard Lair, who stated: "Elephants in Thailand desperately need tourism" and that "The only viable future for the bulk of Asia's elephants and certainly Thailand's elephants is really well managed, well run, private elephant camps that take in tourists with the important words being 'well managed'" (Richard Lair, interview, 24 June 2015). Tipprasert (2002) also recommended expansion of the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre into ecotourism ventures in other regions to employ elephants following the 1989 logging ban.

In the illegal logging industry, elephants are typically at higher risk than those working in tourism. In 2002, Salwala estimated that approximately 1500 elephants were employed in illegal logging and some were being taken over borders into other countries (Salwala, 2002, p. 223). Lair (1997, pp. 199-202) describes the illegal logging operations in northern Thailand as sophisticated syndicates with a number of ways of evading law enforcement. Risks for elephants in illegal logging include being given amphetamines to increase their productivity (Lair, 1997; Laohachaiboon, 2010, p. 78; Salwala, 2002, p. 223), being employed by violent people and working in dangerous terrain (Lair, 1997), working in areas (for example, the border with Myanmar) where they can accidentally detonate landmines left in the ground (Laohachaiboon, 2010, p. 81; Schliesinger, 2010, p. 21), and lack of access to professional veterinary care (Lair, 1997; Salwala, 2002, p. 223).

Western Relationships with Elephants Through History

Western powers have also long used elephants. The Romans sometimes used elephants in war (both Asian and African elephants) but more often elephants were a source of spectacle or entertainment (Sukumar, 2011, p. 83). In medieval Europe, elephants were sometimes imperial gifts and elephants have appeared as a

Christian symbol in Europe since the eleventh century (Sukumar, 2011, pp. 89-90). In Christianity, elephants have been a symbol of "wisdom, level-headedness, strength, chasteness and dependability" (Sukumar, 2011, pp. 89-90). The imperial powers of Portugal, Britain, France and the Netherlands used Asian elephants in war, logging, and big-game hunting (Sukumar, 2011). Although Thailand was not colonised, the British used existing captive elephants in Thailand to undertake large-scale logging (de Alwis, 1991, p. 123). From the late 1890's and into the early 20th century the British dominated teak leases in northern Siam (as it was then called) as a result of collaborations between British timber merchants (in particular, the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation Ltd), the monarchy in Bangkok, and the British Foreign Office (Barton & Bennett, 2010).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Asian elephants were exported to Europe for display and this was followed in the nineteenth century by the rise of circuses in England, Europe and the United States (Sukumar, 2011, pp. 235-237). The first elephant arrived in America in the late eighteenth century (Nance, 2013, p. 15) and by the early 20th century, elephants were a highlight of travelling circuses in America (Arluke & Bogdan, 2010, p. 188). In the circus, elephants were labourers, performers, and celebrities with constructed biographies whose real selves were kept hidden from audiences (Nance, 2013). Elephants were marketed as individuals with personalities that audiences could identify with and become engaged in stories about, which coincided with a cultural shift towards pet-keeping in America (Nance, 2013, pp. 45-46). Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a rise in concern for animal welfare in American circuses which complicated the relationship between media and circuses as media outlets became both promoters and critics of circuses (Nance, 2013, p. 180) and some circuses started claiming to use 'kindness training', provoking customers to think about how elephants were trained (Nance, 2013, pp. 201-207).[6]

In a more recent book, Nance has gone on to detail the nineteenth century case study of Jumbo as the first international celebrity elephant that distracted people from issues of animal exploitation in other contexts, until his untimely death meant he too was reduced to raw material for taxidermy, and became a scientific specimen (Nance, 2015). Individual elephants continue to capture media attention in the West with the births and deaths of zoo elephants being newsworthy events

[6] Debate about elephant welfare was largely amongst literate consumers with access to print media (Nance, 2013, p. 198).

(Wylie, 2008). Recent examples of media interest in zoo elephants around the world include The Age's coverage of the health problems of a new elephant calf in Melbourne (Donelly, 2016), coverage of the death of Kimbo at Denver Zoo (Villanueva & KUSA, 2014) and the much publicised plight and death of Hanako near Tokyo (BBC, 2016).

To some extent, parallels can be drawn between Nance's history of American circus elephants and the current situation for tamed elephants in Thailand. It is not uncommon still in Thailand for people to be injured or killed in incidents involving working elephants. In 2016, for example, a British tourist died and his fellow passenger injured after being thrown from an elephant on a trek on the island of Koh Samui (Quinn, 2016) and this story appeared on multiple news websites. In another example involving a trekking elephant, a mahout was killed by an elephant which then ran off into the jungle with its passengers, a Chinese family of three, on its back (see for example Malm (2015)). It is also noteworthy that it is rare for the death of mahouts to receive as much media attention as the deaths of tourists in elephant-related incidents (Cadigan, 2016). In both these cases, the incidents reignited debate about the ethics of elephant trekking. As was the case in the American circus (Nance, 2013), Thai elephants that have killed or injured people, may be sold to another company and renamed so other tourists are not aware of the elephant's history (Winn, 2016).[7]

Western media coverage of elephants in Thailand often focuses on welfare issues in the tourism industry. Examples include local newspapers writing about the volunteer tourism experiences of people in their community with headlines such as "Farm girl finds calling on globetrotting adventure" (Burridge, 2017) and "Living with Elephants Called A Vacation to Remember" (Graham, 2015), as well as opinion pieces about ethical elephant tourism (see for example Pearce (2015) and Collins (2015)).

Bringing About Change for Elephants

In 1991, establishment of the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre (TECC) by the Forest Industry Organisation (FIO) signalled a change in perspective from seeing elephants as 'beasts of burden' to endangered species and the TECC was developed into an eco-tourism venture in late 1990's (Laohachaiboon, 2010, pp. 79-80).

[7] Nance (2013, p. 179) also found that in the early American circuses, difficult female elephants were sold to rival organisations and given a new name.

Debabrata Swain (2004, pp. 136-137) suggests that eco-tourism has a lot of potential for helping local people in elephant-range countries through generating income and providing employment opportunities, but he adds that development of eco-tourism infrastructure is reliant on the international community to provide resources as many elephant-range countries are developing nations. It is not clear whether Swain's position calls for co-ordinated, formal arrangements between countries to enable ecotourism development in elephant-range countries, or whether the development of small eco-tourism operations established by interested individuals or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that attract resources and support from concerned individuals in the West fulfil the need he refers to.

Kurt and Garai (2007, p. 214) note that there is a rising number of elephant welfare organisations, and animal welfare NGO's are influential in shaping perspectives on elephant welfare (Duffy & Moore, 2011, p. 591). A number of international welfare organisations have campaigned for improved welfare standards in the trekking industries in Africa and Thailand or called for an end to keeping elephants in captivity (Duffy & Moore, 2011, p. 590). Consumer choice can also coerce organisations into more ethical enterprise (Butcher, 2003, p. 103) and in recent years, NGOs have turned their attention to travel agencies calling on them to change their range of offerings to travellers to include only those encounters that they deem ethical in their treatment of animals, and these campaigns have attracted international media attention. World Animal Protection has been asking travel companies to pledge to stop offering elephant rides see for example, The Guardian's report by Coldwill (2015) and media coverage of Intrepid Travel's decision to stop offering certain types of elephant tourism (Manchester, 2016). PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) in the US has also recently convinced a travel company in Boston to stop offering elephant rides (Goodison, 2017). In 2002, PETA circulated footage of a *phajaan* and called for a boycott of all travel to Thailand because of animal abuse - a campaign which affected the Thai tourism industry and created further awareness amongst foreigners of elephant welfare issues (Laohachaiboon, 2010, pp. 85-86)[8]. As noted from the points made earlier by Lair and Kontogeorgopoulos, not all those with expertise in elephant management accept the argument espoused by organisations such as PETA that keeping working elephants is

[8] Ogden et al. (2013, p. 9) argue further that animal rights organisations such as PETA reinforce dichotomies of human/nonhuman through perceiving nonhuman animals as part of nature, separate from the human.

inherently cruel and media coverage of these stories does not necessarily offer balanced perspectives on elephant welfare. Locke, for example, describes factual inaccuracies in an article published by The Guardian (P. Smith, 2017). Locke criticises the article for exaggerating the number of tourists carried by elephants in a *howdah,* for suggesting that bull hooks might be used to control elephants which is not typical of Nepal, and for failing to acknowledge the role of a Westerner, John Coapman, in pioneering the elephant-back safaris as a tourism activity (Piers Locke *personal communication,* 2017). Locke (2017b) also raises the debates about the morality of keeping working elephants and argues for the possibility that tame elephants form meaningful attachments to human colleagues which needs further consideration in discussions about bringing about change for elephants, and an example of this from my own fieldwork is described in chapter 3.

Wearing, McDonald, and Ponting (2005, p. 427) argue for the potential of NGOs to effect change in tourism practice but in general, western organisations campaigning for change in welfare standards and the release of captive elephants in Thailand are not engaged with the locality-based challenges (Duffy & Moore, 2011, p. 594). Captive elephants in Thailand cannot simply be returned to the wild - there is not enough space for them to live safely in the wild, and mahouts are dependent on them (Duffy & Moore, 2011, p. 594). As Richard Lair notes, while he believes elephants should not be kept in captivity "There is no place that's suitable for wild elephants that doesn't already have them" (Richard Lair, interview, 24 June 2015). Bringing about change for tame elephants is not simply a matter of lobbying for their freedom and changing consumer demand. It requires practical solutions or viable alternatives that provide for both the elephants and the people that depend on them.

In Lair's view (1997, p. 191) small elephant conservation NGO's contribute to positive change by educating people, raising awareness and establishing future elephant-keeping models. Lair also predicted that elephant sanctuaries would have potential for solving some of the problems experienced by tamed Thai elephants and there was a lot of support for the idea of establishing sanctuaries. He also predicted, however, that sanctuaries would be challenged to generate sufficient income to support both elephants and mahouts, and to provide sufficient fresh food affordably, especially if located in-and-around urban areas (Lair, 1997, pp. 207-209)

In 2002, amongst other recommendations for improving welfare for tame elephants, Tipprasert recommended improving the legal status of tame elephants. At that time, they were protected only by the Draft Animal Act (1939) alongside the water buffalo, cow, horse, mule and donkey, which did not recognise their endangered status (Lair, 1997, p. 181; Tipprasert, 2002, p. 170). Their wild counterparts however, have been protected since 1921 by the Wild Elephant Protection Act, followed by the Wildlife Reservation and Protection Act of 1992 (Lair, 1997, pp. 181-182).

Recent proposals and developments in the registration of tamed elephants have received media attention. In 2013, a draft "Wild Animals Preservation and Protection Bill" designed to give tamed elephants some of the same protections afforded to their wild counterparts, proposed that all elephants be owned by the state. This was met with protest from mahouts who feared that they would be unfairly punished by the proposed laws (SkyUK, 2013). In 2014, a new animal welfare law was introduced in Thailand but received criticism from animal welfare groups for being too vague to be effective in bringing about change (Yee, 2014). More successful developments include the introduction of identity cards which record identifying information in a bid to curb ivory trading and the illegal capture of wild elephants (Anon, 2015). This has been followed by the establishment of a system of DNA sampling system and a database to crack down on the smuggling of elephant calves and passing them off as the offspring of tamed elephants (Ledger, 2017).

Defining 'Tamed' and 'Domesticated'

> *"The subject of animal domestication brings out a complex mix of moralities: those of care and control; training and manipulation; domination and subjugation; and mastery and paternalism" (Fijn, 2011, p. 129).*

The terms 'tamed' and 'domesticated' are often used by experts and academics to describe working elephants in Thailand in the absence of a more accurate term. Lair (1997, p. 3), in his introduction to *Gone Astray,* debates whether to use the term 'domestic', 'domesticated', 'captive', 'tame elephant' or 'work elephant'. Locke (2014) argues that neither 'domesticated' nor 'tame/d' adequately describe the relationships between Asian elephants and people, explaining that

elephants are not 'domesticated' according to the common scientific interpretation of this word which usually suggests selective breeding, nor are they necessarily 'tamed' which implies docility and a degree of training. He also regards the term 'captive' as problematic for its presumption that elephants do not wish to engage in relationships with people which we do not know to be true. While they cannot be described as wholly 'domesticated', 'tamed', or 'captive', elephants may be subject to a process of 'cultural control' by their integration into human social and economic activities (Ducos, 1978, cited in Locke, 2014, p 14).[9]

Natasha Fijn's (2011) study of the Mongolian herding encampment also explores the complexity of relationships of domestication between herders and non-human animals, and highlights some of the shortcomings of the largely anthropocentric Western understandings of animal domestication. Fijn (2011, p. 19) uses the phrase "co-domestic sphere" to describe the multispecies Mongolian herding encampment by which she means "the social adaptation of animals in association with human beings by means of *mutual* cross-species interactions and social engagement" (emphasis in orginal) Fijn (2011, p. 19). Fijn observed, that in the Mongolian herding encampment, herd animals are allowed to retain their social structure, individual animals are given names and regarded by herders as having their own characteristics and personalities, and human and animal co-develop ways of communicating through sounds and body language (Fijn, 2011, pp. 130, 241-242).Fijn's study demonstrates the human recognition of non-human animal agency in a human-animal relationship and the co-operative nature of domestication.

It could be argued that tamed elephants in Thailand also share 'co-domestic' spaces with people. Although they have not been domesticated in the traditional sense, wild elephants have been trained by humans to live alongside them and participate in human social, economic, and cultural spheres. The sanctuary in which this thesis is set presents a different sort of co-domestic sphere to that studied by Fijn as it seeks to 'untame' elephants while continuing to manage them and have human interactions with them. The agency of elephants is recognised by the sanctuary and they are afforded freedoms that they might not have had in previous relationships with humans in accordance with the sanctuary's values, however, the elephants still

[9] It is worth noting that this problem of definition is not restricted just to elephants in Thailand where other wild species such as gibbons and tigers are also engaged in human economic endeavours.

have *mahouts* (elephant handlers) who prevent them from coming into conflict for example, with farmers whose crops border the sanctuary.

Another word often used in the discourse of the sanctuary is "freedom" and this also requires some unpacking. When elephants are purchased by the sanctuary they are perceived as gaining "freedom" but what this really means is that they gain some "freedoms". They are free from the requirement to undertake labour, they are free from intentional harm, and they are free to make some choices for themselves, but they do not gain total independence. They remain tamed elephants managed by people, albeit, perhaps, with greater freedom than in their previous careers where they were restricted by their service to humans.

Fijn (2011, p. 241) also argues that in being co-domestic, people and animals are also co-dependent. In the tourism industry in Thailand, humans and tamed elephants are economically co-dependent (by which I mean that their joint ventures need to generate sufficient income to support both humans and elephants) though there is no single way to describe the human-elephant relationship in Thailand. For some elephant-keeping people, elephants are companions and family members (see for example, Vortkamp, 2006 p. 25) whereas for others, they are an asset from which income can be generated (see for example, Schliesinger, 2010, p.14).

Consumptive and Non-consumptive Uses of Elephants

Related to the conditions of their captivity, elephants can exist along a spectrum of consumptive and non-consumptive uses. Contrived environments for elephant encounters such as shows where the animals' behaviours are significantly controlled by people (for example performances) could be described as "consumptive" use of wildlife because of the ways in which elephants are used to provide commodified services (rather than a more literal interpretation of consuming a resource such as eating or hunting it), sanctuaries such as the one at the centre of this study offer opportunities to encounter elephants in what could be described as "low consumptive" or "non consumptive" use of wildlife (Duffus & Dearden, 1990, pp. 215-216). Duffus & Dearden (1990, p. 215) write: "Non-consumptive wildlife-oriented recreation (NCWOR) is defined as a human recreational engagement with

wildlife wherein the focal organism is not purposefully removed or permanently affected by the engagement." (Duffus & Dearden, 1990, p. 215).

Drawing on a study conducted by Brown and Henry (1989) about foreign visitors viewing wild elephants in Kenya, and his own observation of the Similipal Sanctuary in India, Swain (2004, pp. 129-130) describes the viewing of elephants by tourists as a non-consumptive use of elephants but that carries monetary value. Swain also describes the "non-use" value of elephants which applies to those scenarios where people do not necessarily desire to have encounters with elephants, but value the existence of elephants, including, Swain suggests, people from non elephant-range countries who support elephant related campaigns but might never travel to see elephants in person (Swain, 2004, p. 133). The data presented in the following chapters indicates that a number of the sanctuary's supporters belong to this category. They provide financial and moral support for the sanctuary's work helping elephants but do not travel to the sanctuary to experience first-hand encounters with elephants. Elephants in the sanctuary setting perhaps have 'intrinsic value' (Shepard, 1996, p. 310) though it can also be argued that the willingness of people to pay to see them means that their intrinsic value is coupled with 'market value' (Duffy & Moore, 2010, p. 746). Barua further suggests that captive elephants are lively commodities that have 'encounter value' through the possibility of affective, sensory encounters (Barua, 2016) which is also applicable to the sanctuary setting.[10]

Defining Affect and Emotion

The chapters that follow discuss encounters with elephants and engagement with elephant issues by examining people's affective and emotional responses to meeting elephants in person, or engaging with stories about elephants either in person or through Facebook. Therefore, it is important to offer definitions of affect and emotion which shape this discussion.

Baruch Spinoza perhaps developed the earliest theory of affect and the key principles of his philosophy still form the basis of many discussions of affect today (Hardt, 2007). These include the principle that affect is mutual - we are able to affect,

[10] In other contexts, Barua argues that elephants also have value as a 'flagship species' for earning resources to be applied in wider conservation contexts (Barua, 2016, pp. 732-733).

and be affected; and that our ability to be affected directly correlates to our desire to act (Hardt, 2007, p. x). Massumi (2002, pp. 27-28) describes affect as "unqualified intensity" which may have associated physiological responses, whereas emotion is "qualified intensity" because the feeling is recognisable. Affect as an unrecognisable physiological response is demonstrated in this description this example from an elephant encounter: *"I'm not sure I can properly explain the feeling flowing through my body when the first elephant walked up to me"* (Bottrell, 2014). Emotion differs from affect in that it requires our attention (Simon, 1982 cited in Posner, Rothbart, & Harman, 1994, p.199) and emotions can be both states and processes "that *mediate* or link persons, actions and, events" (White, 1994, p. 236). Like affect, emotions may be mutually generated and mutually influential; they are not necessarily within an individual but may move between individuals or be created on contact between individuals, or between an individual and an object (Ahmed, 2004, p. 6). Emotions have a political function because they can be used intentionally as coping mechanisms (Sartre in Solomon, 1998, p.6); Emotions can be directed at things, beings or situations, and reveal attitudes towards those things (Solomon, 1998, p. 7); and emotions have a social function because they elicit responses from another person/being - though perhaps not intentionally (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994, p. 83).

Existing research on human-animal interactions draws correlations between the emotional experiences of animal encounters and a desire to help conservation efforts in general (see for example Ballantyne, Packer, Hughes, & Dierking, 2007; Bulbeck, 2005; Dierking et al., 2004; Myers, Saunders & Birjulin, 2004). In this thesis I will further argue that the sanctuary lies at the centre of an 'affect economy', which, Ducey (2007, p. 198) argues, "cultivates engagement and generates energy". A range of emotions are generated through interactions in physical and virtual spaces of the sanctuary which create engagement and mobilise support for the sanctuary. In the context of this study, affect is more often created through 'in person' encounters and experiences at the sanctuary whereas expressions of emotion are more common on Facebook.

Existing Research on Elephant Tourism in Thailand

Existing research on tame elephants in Asia has focused on the close bonds between elephants and the humans with which they co-exist, for example Locke's

(2016) detailed study of bonds between humans and elephants in a Nepali elephant stable and Lainé's (2016) research into collaborative human-elephant labour in logging in northeast India. By contrast, this study is concerned with the formation of emotional attachments to elephants from real-life encounters that are short in duration through volunteer tourism, or occur entirely in a virtual space.

Previous research that has examined elephant tourism in Thailand include work by Kontogeorgopoulos (2009) and Rattan (2009). Kontogeorgopoulos (2009) conducted a study of visitor satisfaction at three elephant camps in northern Thailand comparing *anthropocentric* elephant camps with one *ecocentric* elephant camp. *Anthropocentric* camps were described as those where the satisfaction of the tourist's desires to see elephants perform or participate in elephant rides was the primary goal of the camp. The *ecocentric* camp on the other hand, places elephant welfare as the priority. Kontogeorgopoulos thereby provides us with a useful way of categorising some elephant-keeping facilities that can be applied in this research, though in recent years there has been an increase in the number of elephant-keeping facilities that seek to balance the welfare of elephants with people's desire to interact with elephants. Such compromises include allowing short, bare-backed elephant rides instead of using a *howdah*.[11] Kontogeorgopoulos' (2009) study found that tourists' choice of type of elephant camp to visit was reflected in their other values about environment and animal welfare. All of the tourists surveyed reported high levels of satisfaction with their experiences though tourists at the *ecocentric* camp reported higher levels of satisfaction than the two anthropocentric camps. Rattan's (2009) research examined the influence of volunteer tourism in an alternative elephant tourism setting on day-visitors to the facility and on the neighbouring community, finding that volunteer tourism had a positive effect on raising awareness of elephant conservation issues for day-visitors and for producing economic and social benefits for the local community. At the time of writing, there are no known studies of human-elephant relationships that examine emotional and affective responses to elephants through both alternative tourism encounters and Facebook participation to better understand attitudes towards elephants and elephant welfare in Thailand. In the chapters that follow, I hope to make a

[11] These new opportunities for encounters are still not an ideal model from sanctuary founder, Elizabeth's, point of view but she notes that they are more likely to create engagement between tourists and elephants than riding in a *howdah* where there is less opportunity to communicate with the elephant.

contribution to this emerging field of human-elephant relations by examining the work of an elephant sanctuary and attitudes towards elephants drawing on the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, tourism studies and media studies.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The study of human-elephant relations has been undertaken through the lenses of a number of disciplines including geography, ecology, anthropology and history. Increasingly, inter-disciplinary studies and methods are being used to unravel and explain the complexities of human-elephant relationships (Locke, 2013).

This research project employs a mixed-methods approach to compile a multispecies and multi-sited ethnography of alternative elephant tourism and social media connections. Mixed-methods approaches can both facilitate multi-sited and multispecies research (extended further by The Matsutake Worlds Research Group who also employ a collaborative multi-researcher dimension to their approach (Choy et al., 2009a; Choy et al., 2009b) and facilitate the multi-disciplinary approaches championed in the emerging field of *Ethnoelephantology* (Locke, 2013). Marcus (1995, p. 103) suggests that media studies is one of the first disciplines where multi-sited ethnography has emerged as scholars have studied both the production of media and the reception of messages, and a multi-sited approach is employed in this project to a similar end.

The two main methods employed in this project are participant observation at the fieldwork site, and observation of comments posted on the sanctuary's public Facebook page.

Internet-*related* Ethnography

Postill and Pink (2012, p. 124) describe the internet environment as a field-work site in which an ethnographer can be a participant observer and produce ethnographic data. This study is not an online ethnography in the sense of the scope undertaken by Postill & Pink, which conceptualises online field sites as 'digital societies' (pg 127) as this project does not actively participate in social media and blogs from a range of sources but focuses on comparatively 'static' data from a single Facebook page. It does however, draw on their idea of "internet-*related* ethnography" which they describe as "ethnography that engages with internet practices and content directly but not exclusively" (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 125).

Postill and Pink's (2012) study involved travelling to physical locations to draw connections between internet activities and "locality-based realities" (p. 123), allowing for a comparison of lived-experiences and social media behaviours. Other existing research that can also be described as internet-*related* ethnography include Coleman's (2017) study on the political engagement of computer hackers and Miller's (2011) 'Tales From Facebook' which examines the convergence of the online and offline lives of people in Trinidad.

Internet-*related* ethnography recognises that co-location of people can be both physical and virtual, and that connections and behaviours move between physical and virtual spaces. Pink (2009 in Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 124) describes; "'ethnographic places' that traverse online/offline contexts and are collaborative, participatory, open and public" - they can be conceived as intangible links between things that may, or may not be connected to a physical location.

This methodological understanding developed by Postill and Pink aligns with the goals of this research, to understand how affective connections are formed by people towards elephants through real-life encounters at the location of the sanctuary and through mediated virtual encounters with the sanctuary via Facebook.

Multi-Method Approaches

The strengths and flaws of individual research methodologies, help make the case for employing a multi-method strategy. Locke and Keil (2015) argue that conducting ethnographic research with nonhuman subjects would benefit from the incorporation of methodologies from the natural sciences. This project argues for the possibility that human-elephant relationships can also exist in virtual spaces and can borrow from a wider set of methodologies in the social sciences to investigate them.

A combination of research methods cannot overcome all of the flaws of a single method. However, Brewer and Hunter (2006) have constructed an instructive text on the ways in which the use of multi-method research strategies in a project can reduce the impacts of the methodological flaws of a single method approach. This includes mixing reactive strategies such as fieldwork and interviews which actively engage with participants, with nonreactive strategies (Webb, Campbell, Schwart, & Sechrest, 1996 in Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p. 2) such as analysis of the materials generated by people without interacting with them directly. Using more

than one methodology can also be used to test the validity of data obtained by each method (Sieber, 1973 in Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p.35).

Qualitative Research

The discovery of social meaning and the construction of social reality is one of the main drivers of qualitative research (Boeije, 2010, p. 6). Qualitative research provides an opportunity to investigate the meaning of encounters between elephants and people and capture meaning being formed. Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p. 11) outline Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionist approach which could be applied in this study to argue that foreigners visiting elephants in Thailand, or interacting with sanctuaries on Facebook, do so because they both attach meaning to this and because meaning is created from the interaction. Blumer (1969) outlines three premises for symbolic interactionism. The first is that human action towards other people, beings, objects and things is determined by the meanings that they have associated with those other forms; secondly that social interaction is the source of meaning, and thirdly that meaning-making is also a process of interpretation by the individual (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). "Non-symbolic interaction" on the other hand responds to the actions of others without interpreting the meaning of the action, for example, a reflexive response (Blumer, 1969, p. 8). Blumer further describes human interaction as a mediated process involving interpretation, symbols, and the seeking of the meaning of behaviour Blumer (1969, p. 79) and this is also the case with understanding human-elephant encounters as discussed in later chapters.

Throughout the course of a research activity, participants are also continuously interpreting the meaning of their experiences and interactions for themselves (Blumer, 1969 in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.11). Tracing interactions in person and online provides an opportunity to follow through on the continued development of meaning for participants and how that meaning is performed in a virtual environment.

Participant Observation

Kawulich (2005) describes participant observation as "the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the

natural setting through observing and participating in those activities." Developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, early examples of participant observation include Frank Hamilton Cushing's research with the Zuni Pueblo people in the 1870's, Bronislaw Malinowski's research in the Trobiand Islands in the 1920's, and his contemporary, Margaret Mead's research in Samoa (Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation typically involves fieldwork where the researcher is part of the action, allowing them to build relationships with research subjects and produce experiential knowledge (Bernard, 2011, pp. 256-257). A method involving participant observation fieldwork was chosen because it is flexible, inherently multi-method, and provides an opportunity to both observe behaviour (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 126) and investigate ideas (Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p. 72).

Participant observation is also subject to methodological challenges. Because participation observation involves shared experiences and interactions with participants that result in the production of interpretive data, the data collected contains the voice of the researcher (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002, p. 66), and the coding of data is conducted according to the researcher's interpretation, and their research objectives (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 126). In this regard, researchers need to be able to acknowledge their influence on their data and reflect on their own emotions (Boeije, 2010, p. 131).[12] This also means that repeating fieldwork to prove its reliability is particularly difficult (Sumser, 2001, p. 102).

Data collected through participant observation and interviews may also be subject to impression management (Goffman, 1967). Impression management involves defensive or protective manoeuvres in social interactions to save face for those involved in the interaction, which might include avoiding encounters, omission of information that is inconsistent with the impression that is being conveyed, or avoiding topics that might offend or embarrass another party in the interaction (Goffman, 1967, pp. 15-17). Participants in the field may, either consciously or subconsciously, practice impression management when sharing information with the researcher (Goffman, 1967 in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 76). Bernard (2011, p. 277) notes that a strength of building rapport through participant observation is that over time, the role of the researcher is less conspicuous and participants may be less likely

[12] To this end, I should declare here that this research topic was inspired by a personal interest in elephants and previous experience of alternative elephant tourism in Thailand. The research design has also been tailored to personal circumstances of full-time work and the limited time this has made available for research.

to practice impression management but, on the other hand, Bernard notes that by building rapport the researcher practices impression management.

Another shortcoming of interviewing in the field is that participants may be asked to describe things or ideas that they are not used to explaining (DeVault, 1990 in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 98). Furthermore, in transcribing interviews or writing field notes, another layer of detail is removed as expressions, tone, emphasis, and non-verbal behaviour cannot be captured (Boeije, 2010, p. 72). Yet successful field work requires the researcher to be aware of non-verbal cues that indicate an affective response to a particular question, and be able to change the topic or rephrase the questions (Berg, 2007, p. 121).

For this project, participant observation was undertaken in the elephant sanctuary for a period of three weeks to gain an understanding of the sanctuary's operating model and visitors' experiences of staying at the sanctuary, as well as visitors' choices to participate in alternative elephant tourism. The original research design involved a combination of participation and observation of activities in the sanctuary, and unstructured and semi-structured interviews with participants. In designing the project, a fluid style of interview was selected so it could be adapted to what was most desirable for the participant - either to provide them with the opportunity to openly discuss the topics important to them, or to be guided by some pre-prepared questions (Bernard, 2011, p. 158). Interviews are not about getting answers to questions but creating a way for participants to share their thoughts and experiences (Matthews, 2005 in Boeije, 2010, p. 63).

In reality, the methodology had to be adapted further to suit fieldwork conditions. The days were usually full with activities undertaken as a group, thus limiting opportunities for one-on-one interviews. However, the structure of the day allowed for plenty of detailed information sharing and the development of rapport, particularly while observing elephants on morning walks, and at meal times. Rather than conducting interviews, I spent each evening typing descriptive notes about the day's activities, conversations and interactions, and shared summaries of my observations with participants. In retrospect, the period of time in the field was also too short to formulate good interview questions for semi-structured interviews. This adaption maximised the positive aspects of unstructured interviewing. There was no need for me to control conversation and the structure of each day, as well as the setting, facilitated an environment in which participants shared their thoughts and

feelings openly without restrictions on time. The data obtained could be more likened to narratives than questions and answers. The role of story-telling is a crucial theme in the discussion on building engagement and my fieldwork experiences mirror this. Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2015, pp. 126-127) warn that the presence of recording devices may alter the data provided by participants or make participants feel uncomfortable. In the field for this project, a voice recording device did not seem appropriate and one was not used.

Convenience Sampling

To minimise the impact of people on the elephants, only a small number of guests can be accommodated at the sanctuary at one time, usually staying for 3-5 nights each. Convenience sampling was used to select participants. All nine visitors to the sanctuary during the course of the fieldwork agreed to participate, as well as the sanctuary's founder, who was my main informant. While convenience sampling is the least scientific sampling method (Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p. 94) it was deliberately chosen over a more structured sampling method. It was important that participants volunteered information willingly and freely as 'teasing' information out reluctant informants could undermine the validity of the data. Some participants were more open with sharing their thoughts and experiences than others. Convenience sampling was also more suited to the short period of time of the fieldwork and the lack of information available about prospective participants prior to commencing fieldwork. All of the visitors to the sanctuary spoke English as a first language. However, convenience sampling also allowed for the possibility of other potential obstacles in terms of language and culture that could have influenced potential subjects ability and/or willingness to take part in the research.

Data Coding

Boeije (2010) outlines three stages for coding of data: "Open Coding" - the first coding of the data (p. 96), "Axial coding" - grouping data by themes (p. 108), and "Selective coding" - analysing relationships between the data (p. 114). As the amount of fieldwork data was relatively small, the open-coding stage involved indexing data according to a small number of themes (including Facebook use, elephant

interactions, and alternative tourism) and the second stage meant organising field notes into groups of data on these over-arching themes. A large proportion of sections of data were indexed by more than one theme.

Observing Facebook Participation

The internet records data that can be used for studying behaviour (Fischer, 1997, p. 115 in Ackland, 2013, p. 17) and in the case of this study, Facebook records data that can be used for studying people's ideas, beliefs and attitudes. Analysis of media content in itself is not a new way of gathering information about human-elephant relations. Nance's (2013) historical research outlined in the introduction drew on print media (and the evolution of that media) to understand how members of the public thought and felt about elephants in the American entertainment industry. In traditional media, however, analysing messages is challenging because it is difficult to find out how those messages are interpreted by audiences. Sumser (2001, pp. 199-200) for example, explains that content analysis has only been able to study the content of messages produced by media but could not study how those messages were interpreted by audiences. In interactive social media and news websites, people can express their responses to, and interpretation of messages through the functionality of comments sections, though the sample is limited as researchers can only access data from those members of the audience who are compelled to share their comments publicly, meaning they cannot be taken as representative of the audience as a whole.

The Facebook data collection for this project involved indirect observation of information that was publicly available. At the time of collection, a Facebook log-in was not required to view the sanctuary's Facebook page and see comments on their posts. Collecting data online is indirect and unobtrusive which can present an opportunity to collect data less influenced by the researcher, but this introduces new ethical considerations (Ackland, 2013; Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Clough & Nutbrown, 2002) which are discussed further below.

The Facebook sample included every publicly available post for a period that covered 21 weeks. The data was collected after this period so that data was relatively 'static' although people could potentially go back and alter their responses. Data from Facebook were collected on a template form (one for each of the sanctuary's

Facebook post) that gathered both quantitative data about the number of reactions/actions taken in respect of the post (that is the number of likes, shares, comments and views (if a video)) as well as a summary of the topic of the post, a list of key themes from the comments left by Facebook users, and identifying comments left by fieldwork participants.

The quantitative data was used to determine which of the sanctuary's Facebook posts had the highest impact amongst other Facebook users and this revealed themes by which the posts could by further categorised. For example, the highest impact posts were about elephants that had passed away, the rescuing of new elephants, and updates about popular elephants.

Collecting data online faces some of the same challenges of traditional fieldwork mentioned above. It cannot necessarily be easily repeated to verify the data, and, as with answers offered by interview participants, we cannot know whether content posted online is a genuine reflection of the poster's values (Ackland, 2013, p. 39) or whether online content is also subject to impression management (Goffman, 1967).

Social media is also evolving (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 125) and the changing functionality of social media itself influences the kind of data that can be collected. For example, in the months following the data collection for this study, the 'like' button on Facebook was replaced with a range of six possible responses. If repeating the data collection now, one would be able to breakdown the number of responses to those who not only 'liked' a post, but those who had an 'angry' response, a 'happy' response and so forth. Repeating the data collection now would likely lead to richer and more telling statistics than the information that was available at the time - limited by the functionality of Facebook.

Before the collection of Facebook data could be completed, Facebook display settings were changed making it too challenging to continue collecting data without being logged in to the site. It was a deliberate decision to only view data that was publicly viewable without being logged in. Therefore, the decision was made to use the smaller sample of data already collected from the time when the data was publicly available rather than compromise the methodology by continuing to collect data via changed conditions. The planned sample was for a period of 28 weeks but 7 weeks of data were sacrificed, meaning that the sample collected covers a period of 21 weeks and includes 32 Facebook posts.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the combination of participant observation fieldwork and analysis of publicly available material online, the protection of the identity of informants required careful planning. Pseudonyms are used for all participants including the elephants so that individual participants cannot be traced.

To ensure that there was no element of deception, I ensured that fellow guests at the sanctuary knew that I was joining them in the capacity of a researcher but emphasising that their participation was optional. In compliance with the University's Human Ethics Committee's requirements, I provided a written explanation of the project and received signed-declarations that they agreed to the conditions of my research. Templates of these documents are included in the appendix.

Ethics and consent in online research can be made either simpler or more complicated by the distinction between whether a website is primarily for information sharing (such as news websites) or social networking (such as Facebook) (Ackland, 2013, p. 45). More recently Facebook has become as much a news sharing website for organisations as it is a social networking site, but a possible ethical concern arises if an individual posts an item in a public domain without being aware of the extent of its visibility (Ackland, 2013, p. 45). In the case of commenting on news websites, users can take steps to protect their own identity by creating an avatar though on Facebook, users have to post comments using their own profile which, in the case of a large number of users, is created using their real name and a picture of themselves. Many organisations have open Facebook pages where conversations and debates take place in the comments section, often between strangers. In these instances, people must almost certainly be aware that they are writing in a public forum. While conversations are not very common on the sanctuary's Facebook page, there is evidence that people following the sanctuary are aware that they are part of a wider network and this is discussed in later chapters. Ackland (2013, p. 45) proposes that informed consent for online research is not necessarily required by researchers but steps should be taken to protect the real identities of the people creating the online content they are studying. For this study, fieldwork participants gave permission for their comments on the sanctuary's

Facebook page to be quoted in the study with a pseudonym, and no personal identifying information has been collected about other Facebook users generating content used in this study.

The fieldwork portion of this project was very short and the number of participants at the fieldwork site was also relatively small. The study does not yield enough data to infer conclusions about a wider population (Bernard, 2011, p. 147; Brewer & Hunter, 2006, pp. 95-96) but serves as an introductory study to ways of understanding attitudes towards elephants and the intersections between alternative tourism and social media that may produce useful insights for forming more in-depth research in the future.

Chapter 3

Alternative Tourism, The Sanctuary's Tourism Model, and Elephant Encounters

This chapter takes us into the physical location of the elephant sanctuary. It begins, however, by giving a brief overview of the history of tourism development and describes the sub-categories of tourism labelled as alternative tourism, eco-tourism and volunteer tourism in order to place the sanctuary's tourism model in the context of these categories. It then introduces the human participants who were fellow guests at the sanctuary during my fieldwork, as well as some of the sanctuary's elephant residents, and describes the ways in which the sanctuary setting fosters learning through observing elephant behaviour and the telling of stories about elephants. It also examines the nature of human-elephant encounters in the sanctuary.

History of Tourism

The history of international tourism has its origins in the 'Grand Tour' of the 16th century in which privileged young people 'from the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe undertook extended trips to continental Europe for educational and cultural purposes' (Weaver and Opperman, 2000, p.61 in Wearing, 2001, p.4). From the 18th century, the era of the industrial revolution, transport networks and travel for leisure started to grow (Wearing, 2001, p. 4) and the first excursion of a conducted Thomas Cook train in 1841 hailed the beginning of mass tourism (Hall, 1995, p.38 in Wearing, 2001, p.4). Through the 19th century mass tourism progressed as infrastructure development meant that tourists became more isolated from host communities and as numbers of tourists increased and mass global tourism has grown rapidly in the 20th century (Wearing, 2001, pp. 4-5) facilitated by growing prosperity in industrialised countries (Duffy & Moore, 2010, p. 745). A period of economic boom between 1945 and 1973 meant that many people experienced an increase in leisure time and motivation to travel (Tomazos & Butler, 2009, p. 199) and Duffy and Moore (2010, p. 745) argue that from the 1970s, "Tourism development fitted very well with the new faith in markets, decentralisation and roll-back of the state". Ringis (1996, pp. 94-95) writes of a further possible influence in the early development of tourism in Thailand (known then as Siam) in the nineteenth century -

that of the memoir written by gentleman travellers to the region (opened up to travel by Western colonialism) and read by 'armchair travellers' of the middle-class West.

Alternative Tourism

Alternative tourism is an umbrella term for tourism experiences that have emerged as alternatives to mass tourism. Types of alternative tourism can include, but are not limited to, eco-tourism, nature tourism, and volunteer tourism. Mass tourism is defined as large numbers of people visiting destinations through pre-organised travel packages and it has been criticised, perhaps unfairly in some cases, for negatively impacting host communities and environments (Butcher, 2003; Butler, 1990; Cohen, 1979). Some of the negative impacts of mass tourism listed by D. Fennell (1999, p. 8) include changing landscapes and social behaviour, redirecting profits back to large companies, and changing the lifestyle of the host community by employing its members on a seasonal basis in service roles.

Alternative tourism, on the other hand, is popularly thought of as being fairer in terms of serving local interests, and more sustainable. Dearden and Harron (1994, p. 82) describe sustainable tourism, as tourism experiences that are specifically sought out by people, but managed in a way that maintains the "integrity of the attraction" and ensures ongoing interest in the attraction. This does not mean, however, that mass tourism cannot be sustainable (Butcher, 2003, p. 26) or that nature tourism and eco-tourism cannot overlap with, or become, mass tourism (Weaver, 2008, pp. 22-23). Duffy (2008, cited in Duffy & Moore, 2010, p. 746) further argues that alternative tourism and mass tourism are part of the same system of capitalism and reliance on global markets.

Small-scale alternative tourism enterprises also have potential weaknesses including not being sufficiently profitable to implement sustainable practices, making areas vulnerable to more damaging tourism development, and being more intrusive on the host community (Weaver and Lawton, 2006 in Weaver, 2008 p 22).

In his seminal book *Ecotourism: an Introduction* David Fennell suggests that bringing about change in mass tourism practices may be more effective in resolving some of the problems it creates than developing alternatives stating: "Instead, it is more realistic to concentrate efforts in attempts to reform the worst prevailing

situations, not the development of alternatives." (D. Fennell, 1999, p. 10). In the context of Thai elephant tourism, the development of alternatives may be part of the process of bringing about change in mass tourism which, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, is regarded by some experts as necessary for the tame elephants of Thailand but currently plagued with welfare issues. Elephant encounters in mass tourism are those popular experiences involving elephant trekking and elephant performances that have been widely criticised for the negative impacts they have on elephant welfare. Alternative elephant tourism opportunities that have emerged in recent years tend to create environments that allow visitors to interact with, and observe elephants that limit the impact on elephants by not requiring them to undertake work. The development and popularity of alternative elephant tourism institutions demonstrate some possible solutions for problems found in mass elephant tourism.

Voluntourism

Wearing's definition of 'voluntourism', or 'volunteer tourism' is commonly cited in academic literature:

> "The generic term 'volunteer tourism' applied to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment" (Wearing, 2001, p. 1).

Volunteer tourism is an increasingly significant branch of the tourism industry. The founding of the US Peace Corps in 1961 in response to fear of the spread of communism heralded the beginning of organised international volunteering in the mainstream (Tomazos & Butler, 2009, pp. 198-199). Between 1990 and 2013, the number of people paying to participate in volunteer projects around the world increased from an estimated 33,000 (OECD as cited in Wearing, 2001 p. 50) to approximately 1.6 million (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 319). Volunteer tourism experiences can largely be divided into two models. The first is where experiences are arranged by "sending" organisations, usually based in the tourist's

home country. The second is local organisations at the host destination that introduce a volunteer tourism component. A large proportion of research focuses on the former with less attention being paid to independent local projects such as the sanctuary at the centre of this study.

Wearing et al. (2005, p. 426) argue that NGOs with volunteer tourism opportunities create more meaningful interactions with host communities and employ greater care for nature,[13] influence attitudes and behaviours, and create experiences that are mutually beneficial for the tourist and the host community. However, voluntourism has also been criticised for having negative impacts on host communities. Criticisms include taking away opportunities for paid labour for locals or undercutting the local labour market by paying to work for free (Guttentag, 2009, p. 545), unsatisfactory work carried out by unskilled volunteers (Guttentag, 2009, p. 543), and what could be regarded as the commodification of misfortune. An example of this is AIDS orphanages in Africa where orphans have become a type of commodity and in some cases, children are taken to orphanages when they do in fact have a family (Richter, 2010). Furthermore 'orphans' typically form strong emotional attachments to volunteers who then leave after a relatively short period of time creating abandonment issues and hindering social development (Richter, 2010). Raymond and Hall (2008) argue that volunteer tourism can reinforce stereotypes rather than foster cross-cultural understanding, and Coghlan and Fennell (2009, p. 394) note that volunteer tourism must endeavour to avoid becoming a form of 'green imperialism' in which tourists' values are imposed on the host community.

Ecotourism

There has been a lot of detailed discussion in academia about how to define 'Ecotourism' in both tourism studies (for examples see Page & Dowling, 2002; and Weaver, 2008) and anthropology (see for example, West and Carrier, 2004). Ecotourism is a term which covers a broad range of ideas about environmental friendliness, appreciation of nature, and sustainability. Tourism scholar, David Fennell offers the following definition (albeit somewhat idealised and prescriptive) to incorporate all of the possible experiences that come under the ecotourism umbrella:

[13] The authors in Tourism Studies cited in this chapter use the term 'nature' often implying an entity separate from the human. This notion would be challenged by anthropology and multispecies ethnography.

> "Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits, and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation of preservation of such areas."
>
> (D. Fennell, 1999, p. 43).

Based on a survey of bird watchers, trekkers and park visitors to the Doi Ithnanon National Park in northern Thailand, geographers Hvenegaard and Dearden (1998) profile the typical eco-tourist as being motivated to see wildlife (see also Caissie & Halpenny, 2003 and Duffus & Dearden, 1990), having a pre-existing interest in conservation[14], a high level of education, and they spend more time at the destination. They may also be motivated by the opportunity to learn as learning has been identified a personal benefit for participants in volunteer tourism (see for example Coghlan and Gooch (2011)). These descriptors are broadly true of the participants in the fieldwork portion of this study. In each of the three groups of participants, at least one member was motivated to see elephants, a number of participants mentioned having engaged in tertiary-level study, and each group spent at least two nights at the sanctuary. A large number of visitors to the sanctuary are repeat guests. However, for all of the guests in the sample for this study, it was their first visit.

The Participants

Group A, Laura and Mary, are sisters from the U.K.. Laura did not recall how she first found out about the sanctuary, but once she knew of them, she started following them on Facebook. Mary was also independently following the sanctuary on Facebook and they were sharing things back-and-forth between each other before deciding that they should visit in person.

Group B were also from the U.K.: Sandra, her two adult daughters, Emma and Amanda, and Amanda's husband , Timothy. Sandra came across the sanctuary through her online activities. She belongs to an elephant advocacy group in the UK

[14] The term conservation also represents a variety of practices, motivations, and ideas, and is the subject of scholarly endeavours in Anthropology and tourism Studies. See for examples Kals, Schumacher, and Montada (1999); Kopnina (2012); Pennisi, Holland, and Stein (2004).

and has been involved in organising the Global March for Elephants and Rhinos. This trip was organised by Sandra to mark her upcoming retirement and, as a surprise, she booked in Emma, Amanda and Timothy. Emma's love of elephants began on the group's previous trip to Kenya where she met elephants for the first time but she added, it really started with her mum, Sandra, and has been passed down. Emma explained that they are all animal lovers. She fosters pets through a charity and they have always had pets growing up. Amanda works at an animal hospital and had already bought some of the sanctuary's t-shirts before their arrival indicating that Amanda was engaged with this experience prior to the trip. Amanda also wore an iworry t-shirt (about an anti ivory poaching campaign) suggesting a pre-existing interest in elephant conservation.

Group C was from the U.S.: Isla, her adult daughter Olivia, and long-time family friend Natalie. Olivia and Natalie grew up together. The visit to the sanctuary came about, Isla explains, because she had been talking with Olivia and they had decided that they wanted to make a trip involving elephants, but without an interest in riding them. She was also looking for an experience where they would get involved with tasks. Isla found the sanctuary through an online search and Natalie was invited to join them.

Isla said that she was not an elephant person before visiting the sanctuary but she is an animal lover. On being asked if she had become an elephant person as a result of the experience, she said that she had. In this conversation being an "elephant person" was talked about in the same way that people might describe themselves as being "cat people" or "dog people" in vernacular discourse when discussing species with which they have a particular affinity. During conversation Olivia revealed her interest in wildlife by sharing that she is thinking about issues like the fact that some species will go extinct during her life time. Natalie is interested in facts about wildlife. She watches lots of documentaries about wildlife and read all of the information panels on display at the sanctuary. Natalie is also knowledgeable about horse welfare and has had a lot to do with horses growing up.

In each of the three groups, at least one person indicated that they had specifically chosen a sanctuary setting for elephant encounters rather than the more mainstream elephant tourism activities on offer in Thailand. Mary of Group A and Sandra of Group B were both clear that they had determined prior to their travels that they did not wish to engage in elephant riding. Mary said she has never felt a

desire to ride an elephant and Sandra of Group B stated that riding elephants was never an option, adding that she had been outspoken about this when people had asked her in the workplace. This reveals that Sandra, in particular, had strongly held ideas about elephant riding before coming to the sanctuary.

All three groups planned to visit other destinations in Thailand after their stay at the sanctuary but visiting the sanctuary was the main reason for travelling to Thailand. This means that while the sanctuary accommodates a comparatively small number of guests, they do play a role in the wider tourism industry by attracting visitors to Thailand.

The Sanctuary's Tourism Model

The sanctuary's practices that mean it can be categorised as alternative tourism in the context of elephant tourism in Thailand, include the participation of the small number of guests as volunteers, the wellbeing of the elephants as the priority, the freedom of elephants to make their own choices which means also, that interactions between guests and elephants are initiated by the elephant.

While the sanctuary provides an alternative tourism opportunity, Elizabeth explained that tourism is not the main goal of the organisation and it was set up with the capacity to host guests primarily for financial reasons. The vounteer tourism opportunity that has been created generates income to provide for the elephants in the sanctuary's care and employ local staff. If they were able to exist on donations alone, the founder, Elizabeth, explains, the number or frequency of guests would be reduced. She does think that they provide education and an experience but she would also like more time with her family.

Guests do, however, make valuable contributions beyond the income they provide for the sanctuary. Experiences at the sanctuary can be described as volunteer tourism as guests can participate in activities to help the sanctuary care for elephants and other animals. Elizabeth says that guests can make their own experiences and if they do not want to help with tasks then they do not have to, but it is harder work for the sanctuary staff when that is the case. Sandra and Emma both had expectations that they would be doing some work around the sanctuary and Isla had sought out an opportunity to visit an organisation where she could get involved.

Parreñas (2012, p. 674) argues that volunteer tourism creates opportunities for the production of affect through 'custodial labour' in which simple task provide 'meaningful purpose' for volunteer tourists. Parreñas (2012) describes affect in an orang-utan rehabilitation centre where she argues that affect is a dynamic process occurring at the interface between people and orang-utans and differs from the formation of emotion which is embodies within individuals. Humans in this setting experience affect through their vulnerability, through their encounters with orang-utans and through the work or 'custodial labour' undertaken for the animals (Parreñas, 2012, p. 674).

At the elephant sanctuary, guests are given opportunities to participate in custodial labour. For example, the elephants' diet is supplemented through the night by food collected locally. On two occasions, guests help sanctuary staff cut down a crop of banana trees that a farmer has asked the sanctuary to chop down for the elephants. The space needs to be cleared for the next crop and elephants enjoy eating banana trees which are quite small and full of juicy sap. With a number of people helping, filling a truck with banana trees does not take very long but it is hard work on a hot afternoon, and the sap is sticky. The sensory experience of participating in this labour was affective in itself but it was also affective in that it generated investment in the outcome. On both occasions, the guests involved in cutting down the banana trees wanted to know more about the outcomes of their efforts. For example, Emma wondered on the journey back to the sanctuary if there would be an opportunity to see the elephants eating the banana trees we have gathered for them but unfortunately that would not be possible.

Elizabeth believes offers from local farmers such as the crop of banana trees are also a sign that the sanctuary has been accepted by the community. Elizabeth is very conscious of the role of the sanctuary in the local community as she is grateful to the community for accepting her and the sanctuary, and she makes sure that she patronises local businesses. An example of this is a coffee shop in the village that is frequented for its strong wifi connection and iced coffees. Tomazos and Butler (2009, p. 208) argue that the employment of local people is crucial to longevity of a volunteer tourism project or organisation and Elizabeth employs a number of local people in a variety of paid roles.

The sanctuary also plays an important role in providing veterinary care to animals of all species in the surrounding area. Some animals are bought to the

sanctuary to remain there and some are brought in by villagers that need veterinary care but do not have the means to arrange this on their own. Elizabeth organises veterinary treatments and does not accept money in return as the community had embraced her. Sometimes she receives payment in the form of food such as mangoes.

It is Elizabeth's intention to keep the sanctuary small. While they have the land to take many more elephants, a large number of elephants would require a larger number of guests in order to cover costs and that would change how elephants are managed. As Elizabeth was explaining this philosophy to Laura, Mary and I at breakfast one morning, it was noted that the sanctuary is the opposite of a zoo. While we were in a building, the elephants were free to roam around us. Laura and Mary had also shared their enjoyment of seeing young male elephant, Charoen, trumpeting and running around which he is able to do because of the smaller number of tourists on site.

On another occasion, elderly female elephant, Kwanjai, broke into a trot and headed down the road. Elizabeth commented that this was out of character and a few moments later Kwanjai was vocalising and sounded agitated. Elizabeth went to investigate to find that Kwanjai and her mahout had been having a disagreement and Kwanjai had stormed off. This elephant behaviour is not only acceptable in the sanctuary, but they were happy to see Kwanjai making her own decisions.

The sanctuary endeavours to demonstrate gentler methods for managing elephants than those commonly employed in mainstream elephant tourism and an example of this is the management of elephants in musth. Musth can last for several weeks and often bulls in musth in Thailand have their feet shackled for the duration. Wherever possible at the sanctuary, they give elephants in musth a long length of chain without shackles, and time off the chain if their mahout is confident they can handle the elephant. An elderly bull elephant, Somchai, was in musth during the course of my fieldwork. He was contained in the quarantine enclosure but had room to move within the enclosure. In the evenings, he was taken out for a walk under strict supervison but guests were kept well away from him.

One lunchtime, an unfamiliar vehicle came into the sanctuary. Elizabeth explained that sometimes they have people who come into the sanctuary wanting to buy elephants and bull hooks - they believe that because they have elephants they must have hooks. She says that they have a hard time explaining that they do not use

hooks they use voice commands and body language. She also mentions that the hook has not traditionally been used cruelly but there is currently an issue with heavy-handed control of elephants.

Elephant-elephant Interactions

Kurt and Garai (2007) describe the difference between "intensive" and "extensive" elephant keeping systems. Intensive systems usually chain elephants when they are not working, elephants have limited contact with each other, and they are fed rather than getting the opportunity to forage (Kurt & Garai, 2007). In extensive systems, by contrast, elephants spend more time unchained, interact with other elephants, may get to forage, and can make some choices such as their sleeping spot (Kurt & Garai, 2007). The sanctuary has developed a middle-ground between intensive and extensive keeping systems (though the elephants do not work) which has been moving further towards the extensive end of the spectrum with the building of chain-free night-time habitats discussed in part 5 of chapter 5.

Kurt and Garai (2007) also consider that the future of elephant keeping in Asia should tend towards semi-extensive practices as this creates a better understanding of elephants for onlookers than contrived performances and shows. The sanctuary's environment and daily routine provide opportunities for visitors to observe interactions between elephants. The elephants have created their own groupings with some elephants preferring to be by themselves. Each morning, guests follow the elephants to grazing spots in the forest and watch them from a safe distance. The morning walks are usually approximately three hours in duration. This allows for rare opportunities to witness elephant behaviours. On the last morning walk for Group C, we were watching a group of elephants who we will call The Trio, in a forested area when we heard elephants roaring and trumpeting nearby. We moved very quickly back to the path and Elizabeth walked ahead to find out what was causing the distress. Further up the path, Lawan a female elephant, and Somporn a bull elephant, were signalling that they might want to mate with each other and Lawan's friend, Samorn, had become jealous. We were invited to sit on a bank a safe distance away and watch the body language of the three elephants.

At one point Somporn and Samorn locked trunks. Somporn had his trunk over the bridge of Samorn's in what Elizabeth said was a dominance move to try and

lower her head. The source of Samorn's jealousy was unclear. She is a hermaphrodite and has both male and female sexual organs (though is regarded by the sanctuary as female) and might have been jealous of either Lawan or Somporn. After a while, Somporn began to slowly walk away ending the interaction, and Lawan and Samorn walked away together.

From observing interactions such as these, guests are able to learn about elephant body language and social behaviours. These educational opportunities are made possible by the extensive keeping practices that allow elephants to interact.

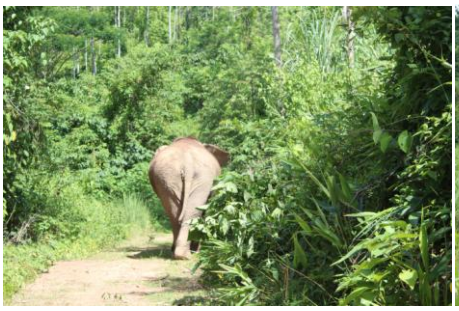

Figure 5: Out on a morning walk
(Photograph: Samantha Eason)

Figure 6: Observing a group of elephants on a morning walk
(Photograph: Samantha Eason)

Human-elephant Interactions

During a conversation early in my fieldwork, Elizabeth mentioned that not all of the elephants like people and Laura had observed that not all of the elephants like dogs but the dogs follow people everywhere. This means that guests do not get to interact with all of the sanctuary's elephants. The exception to this is the Trio, a group of three female elephants who like both people and dogs and are therefore at the centre of a lot of guest interactions. Elizabeth's goal is that one day elephants will live as close to wild as possible on protected land at the sanctuary but she adds that that would not work for the Trio as they want human interaction. Indeed, Locke (2017b) argues that we should not dismiss the possibility that elephants seek out social relationships with humans. One of the members of the Trio, Kanda, is at the centre of a number of guests' elephant encounters during the fieldwork portion of this study and guests Mary and Laura had also observed what they believed was Kanda showing affection towards her mahout.

The layout of features of the sanctuary also facilitates interactions with the Trio. The breakfast hut where guests have breakfast and lunch together is near an

elephant feeding hut on one side and a water hose on the other. The breakfast hut also overlooks a man-made pond that elephants bathe and play in. There is a sign in the hut that advises that all of the guest's interactions with the elephants should be initiated by the elephants. At the end of meals in the breakfast hut, guests can feed any leftover fruit to the Trio if they request it and only from one end of the breakfast hut as Elizabeth does not want to encourage the elephants to help themselves to food set out for guests.

Guests are also able to help the elephants by turning the hose on and holding it so they can fill their trunks. During Group B's stay, the other guests and I were assembled near the hose getting ready for the morning walk. Kanda walked over and at first it appeared that she was walking towards Sandra much to the delight of the group, but in actual fact, she wanted the hose turned on. We turned the water on and Sandra held the hose for Kanda. Over dinner that evening, Elizabeth, Sandra, Emma, Amanda and Timothy discussed their encounters with elephants throughout the day. The misunderstanding where Kanda appeared to be initiating another interaction but actually wanted water was discussed. Earlier that morning though, Kanda had given Sandra a cuddle and Elizabeth confirmed that the interaction had been initiated by Kanda and was a very special moment.

On another day, the Trio were near the water hose wanting water. The hose had not been connected to the tap and Sandra was trying to connect this in order to give them a drink but the elephants kept tugging on different ends of the hose. The episode was very humorous for those watching. I was nearby and helped attach the hose. Sandra turned to me and said that she never thought she would be having a tug of war with elephants. One of her family members looking on from the hut asked Sandra if the interaction had made her day, or her week? Sandra responded that it had made her life - she was clearly delighted by this interaction.

Sandra had another interaction with Kanda when she leaned into the breakfast hut and playfully pushed Sandra. Sandra later expressed concern that she may have upset her friend Kanda but Elizabeth assured her that was not the case.[15] There were a number of interactions between Sandra and Kanda but the meaning of these was sometimes provided through Elizabeth's interpretation and knowledge of Kanda's behaviour and personality. While it is a direct interaction, the production of

[15] On another occasion, Kanda is described by Elizabeth as 'playful'. She explains that Kanda is never dangerous but she could accidentally cause harm.

meaning from the interaction is a mediated process informed by Elizabeth's knowledge of Kanda's life history and disposition.

Elizabeth shares her own affective and emotional responses to the elephants with guests. During conversation with Group A, Elizabeth shared her own belief that Kanda can see into her soul. If she is putting a brave face on a bad day, she believes that Kanda can tell this revealing a conviction in the empathetic abilities of elephants. One of the guests of Group A had felt that Kanda had moved out of her way on a morning walk when she realised that she was blocking the path and to them, this moment indicated that Kanda is aware of those around her. In Group C, Natalie also felt an affinity towards Kanda and at one point during their stay, said that she was in love with Kanda and was not going to leave.

The evening meals were also taken as a group and conversation in the evening often included some reflection on elephant encounters during the day in which guests recounted their encounters and interpreted the meanings of these. The interpretation of meanings of encounters and the mystery of wildlife encounters has also been studied other contexts. For example, in a study conducted by Bulbeck (2005), a visitor at a dolphin encounter experience in Australia noted a sense of isolation that humans feel in relation to other species and that emotion is felt when the gap between species is bridged through interactions (interview with Sue Doye, July 1995 in Bulbeck, 2005, p. 85). Another example indicates that affect from encounters is generated not by the bridging of a species gap, but by the space that cannot be bridged except by imagination, which may lead to anthropomorphism. On encountering a silverback gorilla, popular author Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine (1993, p.21) write: "It was instantly clear what he was doing. It was quite obvious. Or rather, the temptation to find it quite obvious was absolutely overwhelming."

Humans typically have emotional responses to encounters with animals (Orams, 1994, 1996 in Ballantyne, Packer, Hughes, & Dierking, 2007, p. 374) however, affect and emotion are also both generated through encounters in this setting because it is humbling that elephants might choose to be in our company. During conversation with Isla one morning, we both come to the realisation that we were in awe of some of the elephants' choice to be around people, Isla adding, particularly as some had experienced suffering through human actions. In a comparable example, Chilla Bulbeck writes on her study of human-dolphin

encounters "People - including myself - feel honoured or privileged that dolphins have chosen the encounter." (2005, p. 96). Parreñas (2012, p. 677) argues that in the case of an orang-utan rehabilitation centre, affect is created through the vulnerability of both human and orang-utan as both of them risk injury through their encounters. As the example from conversation with Isla shows, humans and elephants both experience vulnerability in the elephant sanctuary. The vulnerability of the human is inherent in sharing space with a physically large animal whereas the vulnerability of the elephant is formed through past experiences of mistreatment by humans. Encounters will elephants in the sanctuary setting may also be more memorable and more affective because they are spontaneous. Sandra could not have predicted that she would have a tug of war with three elephants and a water hose and the spontaneity of this interaction was a significant factor in the delight that she experienced. In interactions with other charismatic species, people have conveyed a feeling of privilege that animals have acknowledged them. In a zoo setting, Myers, Saunders, and Birjulin (2004) for example, discovered that positive emotions towards animals were more likely to be formed where zoo visitors thought that the animals were paying attention to humans.

For those who live and work with animals, knowledge of animal behaviour is learned through experience and modes of multi-species communication that have been developed to convey certain messages between humans and non-humans. Natasha Fijn (2011, pp. 241-242) for example, describes the multi-species communication between Mongolian herder and horse through body language, and some primates have been taught to communicate with people using sign-language (see for example, Fouts & Fouts, 1993). The sanctuary staff use body language and voice commands to communicate with elephants but for those who have shorter interactions, this knowledge, and these modes of communicating and developing understanding cannot be acquired in the time available, meaning that sometimes help is required interpreting encounters.

Two of the participants in this study, down-played the importance of close interactions with elephants in their desire to help the sanctuary elephants. Sandra has had previous experience of meeting elephants where there was not as much interaction and, on being asked whether she thinks that interaction is necessary for creating engagement, she replied that the interaction at the sanctuary had been 'wonderful' but was not necessary for wanting to help elephants. She does believe

that visiting an organisation and understanding them is important for fundraising for them and providing financial support. Laura also said that while it had been a great experience to interact with the elephants, she would also be happy to see them from a distance in the forest if they had been re-wilded.

Furthermore, while some participants may have an interest in conservation of species (Sandra's involvement in the Global March for Elephants and Rhinos, or Olivia's concerns about extinction), elephant encounters in the sanctuary do not necessarily correlate to emotional investment in the species as a whole but they do appear to generate emotional attachment to specific elephants such as Natalie's declared love for Kanda. This emphasises that while elephants are often 'flag ship' species in conservation projects (see for example Barua (2016)), in this setting concerned with elephant welfare, elephants are thinking, feeling, individuals.

Sandra showed a particular interest in fundraising for the sanctuary and she had been involved in fundraising for a number of other animal charities both locally to her and overseas. Elizabeth explained that she had not promoted the elephant adoptions as a fundraising activity because she did not believe she had time to do it properly which would potentially be damaging to the relationships with supporters but having the guaranteed regular income would be really helpful. A little while later Sandra said that she would be retiring in the near future and would be interested in helping build the adoption programme.

Story-telling and Becoming Part of a Story

The sanctuary setting provides a unique environment for telling stories about elephants. During the morning walks and at mealtimes, conversations often flow easily and cover a range of topics. This is also when stories and information about the elephants are shared. Some stories include details of hardships suffered by particular elephants in their previous careers. Visiting the sanctuary in person, also allows guests to become part of stories or to see a 'behind the scenes' view which is perhaps a factor in creating an ongoing engagement for guests. An example of this occurred during Mary and Laura (Group A's) stay.

The sanctuary is located near a village that has a history of elephant keeping for logging. At the time of conducting fieldwork, there were some villagers who wanted to retire their elephants to the sanctuary but did not want to sell them;

they also wanted to come to the sanctuary and work as the mahouts for their elephants. There are some complications for the sanctuary if they do not own the elephants in their care. For example, they would not be able to control how the elephant is managed, or stop them being taken away again to do other work. It also raises issues of liability such as if a fight broke out between a sanctuary owned elephant and a mahout-owned elephant and one of them was injured or killed. Elizabeth is committed to helping the local community and was considering a contract system that would require the elephants to be managed in the sanctuary's style.

At breakfast one morning, Elizabeth announced to Laura, Mary and I that we would be going to see two elephants in the village as the owner wanted them to come to the sanctuary. After lunch, we all joined the sanctuary's delegation to visit the two elephants and from time to time, Elizabeth translated for us what was happening in the conversations. We were hosted in the villagers' home and sampled rice whisky. Laura commented on how amazing it was as it was a real Thai experience and Elizabeth confirmed the authenticity of the rural Thai experience.

Later that evening Laura expressed how interesting it would be to be at the sanctuary when the elephants arrived. It was nearing the end of their stay and Mary and Laura were starting to think about their next visit. On being asked if they would keep in contact with the sanctuary in the meantime, Mary replied that she checked Facebook (as well as Instagram) for stories and Laura was wanting to follow what would happen with the two elephants we had met earlier that day.

In her discussion on membership of an organisation, Olsson (2010) explains that a motivation that people have for remaining involved in organisation is to see results of their work. The example of Laura wanting to know what will happen with the village bull elephants in the future indicates that it is not just seeing the results of work that keep people interested in an organisation. In this example it is a desire to know what happens in the story that began during her stay at the sanctuary.

Leaving the Sanctuary

Before the end of their visits, at least one member of each of the three groups stated an intention to return to the sanctuary in the future and there were some emotional moments when it came time to leave. Mary said she was sad to be

leaving, and Group B's visit ended with a big group hug. The day before departing to their next destination, Isla said "nothing will top the elephants". On being asked to identify highlights from their stay, four guests of Group B said that the morning walks with the elephants had been their favourite part of their stay. Sandra and Emma also mentioned being able to be close to them while observing them in the forest. For Emma, another stand-out moment was feeding watermelon to Kanda. For Natalie of Group C, the morning walks were also a highlight and she added that she really enjoyed watching a different group of elephants (not The Trio) play in the river the day before. Elizabeth added that its unusual for people to be able to be that close to that particular group of elephants. For Isla the best part of the stay was being able to participate and help rather than just standing around.

The sanctuary's model, which can be described as alternative tourism, eco tourism and volunteer tourism, creates a setting for meaningful encounters between visitors and elephants. They are meaningful because of the agency afforded to the elephants in choosing the encounter and the opportunity to share and interpret the experience with a small number of other people. Curtin (2010, p. 164) notes that smaller numbers of participants leads to a greater sense of intimacy in wildlife encounters. In the case of all three groups in this study, guests did not typically experience the sanctuary and elephant encounters as individuals but as part of their personal networks.

The small number of guests and intimate nature of the experience, as well as Elizabeth's willingness to share with guests[16] also mean that people who visit the sanctuary are let in to a 'behind the scenes' view and become part of stories which may be a strategy employed by Elizabeth for creating a sense of privilege and belonging for guests, and gaining their interest in how the story might develop as seen in Laura's concern with what will happen to the bull elephants we met during her visit, or the rescues of Pakpao and Duanphen during the visits of Groups B and C. It also allows for educational opportunities as guests are able to safely observe elephant social behaviour.

[16] Sandra also commented on how friendly Elizabeth is and added that she felt like she had known Elizabeth for a long time.

Chapter 4

Social Media Affordances and Challenges

Social media, and Facebook in particular, present both opportunities and challenges for organisations in attracting attention and creating engagement. This chapter describes the interactive features of Facebook and the affordances of social media for non-profit organisations. It also highlights some of the challenges that organisations have encountered in using social media and then discusses the affordances and challenges for the elephant sanctuary at the centre of this study. The chapter outlines the arguments for conceptualising the sanctuary's Facebook followers as a networked community, and discusses perspectives on the validity of user-generated consumer reviews posted on TripAdvisor.

Interactive Facebook Features

On the way back to the sanctuary from an excursion to cut down banana trees one afternoon, Elizabeth mentioned the importance of creating captions and posting things on Facebook that engage people. Facebook increasingly facilitates engagement and participation through ongoing development of features. Within the first few years of Facebook gaining international popularity, features that gave users the ability to 'like' and comment on posts were added, followed by developments that allowed users to 'share' content, 'tag' other Facebook users in a photo or text, and 'reply' to a comment creating threaded conversations.[17] Facebook was also the first social networking site to allow development of "Applications" by other parties (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 9). As of 2016, a new feature was introduced that allowed users to 'react' to a post with emotions of like, love, laughter, angry, sad, and 'wow' which not only provides more finely-tuned data for researchers but also holds potential for Facebook to further develop its commercial imperatives.

Affordances of Social Media

Constantinides (2014) provides a review of the research into the value of social media marketing in a corporate context. The two-way flow of information

[17] For a chart of Facebook developments see (Wilson, Gosling, Gosling, & Graham, 2012).

between companies and customers facilitated by sites such as Facebook can be used by organisations to research their market through what people are saying about them, quickly respond to issues and engage in damage control, and involve their customers in product development (Constantinides, 2014). While Facebook can be a valuable marketing tool in a corporate context, Elizabeth explains that they (the sanctuary) have never set out to claim to be the best or really marketed themselves.

Obar (2014) conducted a survey of the use of social media by Canadian advocacy groups to compile a list of social media's *affordances* - the concept developed by psychologist, James J Gibson (1986), for describing the opportunities provided by an environment. The majority of organisations in Obar's study were frequent users of Facebook and most also used email to communicate to followers. Facebook emerged as the most utilised space in which people could share their opinions, and in which organisations could have conversations with followers. Other affordances of social media identified by Obar (pp. 221-223) that are applicable in the context of this study include: The ability to attract new followers, communicating to a large number of people on a small budget, ease of use, creation of a feedback loop, facilitating conversation that can be informal and immediate or in "real time", and the dissemination of information. Furthermore, users do not even have to be online at the same time allowing communications across time zones, and it is faster than other forms of communication (Boase & Wellman, 2006, p. 170) meaning that updates are always current. Obar (2014, p. 215) also cites Treem and Leonardi's (2012) study on social media affordances which categorised affordances as visibility, persistence (the information is stored and can be retrieved), editability, and association (relationship building).

A survey by Sparkloft Media in 2011 identified Facebook as the most successful tool that tourism organisations now use to spread awareness of destinations, engage with consumers, and provide a place for customers to share their experiences (Stoll, 2011). Other studies in brand management and tourism have also demonstrated that engaging with a brand or organisation on Facebook has lead to greater emotional attachment and positive marketing outcomes. An experiment conducted by Dholakia and Durham (2010) demonstrated that creating a Facebook page for a cafe had a positive impact on the business. The Facebook fans increased the frequency with which they visited the cafe, promoted the cafe through word of mouth, and had a greater emotional attachment to the cafe than customers that

were not Facebook fans. Hudson, Roth, Madden & Hudson's (2015) study on emotional attachment to music festival brands also found that engaging with a brand on social media was correlated with emotional attachment and subsequent word-of-mouth marketing. People who engaged with brands via social media had stronger attachments to those brands than people that did not. Online word-of-mouth or 'sharing', in the context of Facebook, is very powerful. Shared content (to friends and friends-of-friends, and so on) can quickly reach a large audience (Ugander, Karrer, Backstrom, & Marlow, 2011, p. 13)[18]. Olsson (2010, pp. 423-425) argues that active members of organisations are participants in their role as advocates in a range of ways, and by sharing Facebook content created by the sanctuary, their Facebook supporters also act as advocates for the sanctuary.

Farrow & Yuan's (2011) study of a university alumni association found that in social networks such as Facebook, network members reinforce each other's positive feelings towards an organisation which increases the strength of emotional connections to the organisation. This emotional attachment and frequent communication with the organisation, as well as positive attitudes towards giving and volunteering, led to an increase in actually becoming involved in giving and volunteering. Facebook does not just share information with peers but perhaps harnesses the power of peer pressure. Earl and Kimport (2011) hypothesised that Facebook could advance the use of the internet for collective action (typically protest) by showing other members of an individual's network when they had participated in an action, perhaps drawing new members to a cause, or reinforcing each others' actions when two members of a network could see that they had both engaged in an action. Furthermore, Neff (2012) notes that content shared online by friends is viewed more positively by others than paid advertising, and Held (2014) states that people are also more likely to donate to a cause if they are requested to do so by their peers.

Social media has proven to be a valuable avenue for fundraising for non-profit organisations (Flandez, 2010) and Facebook plays a crucial role in fundraising for the sanctuary. They have never failed to meet a fundraising target and Elizabeth credits the strong Facebook following for rallying around them when they need funds

[18] This might still come as some surprise to the organisation in question. Elizabeth described being taken aback when she was informed by a recent guest at the sanctuary that she was well known in a major US city and everyone there who knew about elephants had heard of her and her sanctuary.

to purchase elephants or make other improvements. When asked if she thought Facebook played a role in raising awareness, Elizabeth responded that it is good for showing tourists determined to ride elephants that there is an alternative. In the context of this conversation, riding elephants was being referred to in terms of mass elephant tourism rather than as a method of elephant management.

Challenges of Using Social Media

A significant limitation of social media use identified by organisations in Obar's (2014, p. 224) study is having the resources (the time and staff in particular) to maintain the social media pages effectively. Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin's (2011, p. 40) earlier case study of the use of social media by individuals representing the American Red Cross noted the same challenge of resourcing staff and time to properly engage with followers online. At the time of conducting fieldwork, the elephant sanctuary at the centre of this study was experiencing resourcing and technical obstacles to posting on Facebook, as well as more complex issues of selecting which pieces of information to share.

The sanctuary's Facebook page is maintained by Elizabeth and a family member but they have a large number of followers and it is not possible to interact with all of the comments on their Facebook posts. While two-way dialogue between the sanctuary's representatives (most often Elizabeth) and their followers is limited, the negative effects of this appear to be minimal. Those who have visited the sanctuary are likely to be aware of the challenges they have getting internet access and if someone asks a question in a Facebook comment, it is observed that sometimes another follower will provide an answer.

The geography of the sanctuary presents additional challenges. Located in a rural area, the wifi connection at the sanctuary is not very strong and can be easily affected by weather conditions. Often to get a good wifi connection, Elizabeth has to travel to a coffee shop in a village a few kilometres away. Travelling to the coffee shop has to be worked around other activities and this also means that she cannot check how a post is being received until the next opportunity to visit the coffee shop. During my fieldwork we stopped there on a regular basis to check emails and Facebook, and post photos as well as a return trip on one occasion to check how a post was being received.

Another challenge for the sanctuary in using Facebook is ensuring that messages cannot be misconstrued, and there is also an indication that members of the audience have preconceived ideas about elephant management practices. Sharing information openly means being vulnerable to criticism and misunderstanding from followers. Elizabeth does not have a formula for selecting what information is shared on Facebook but she is conscious that posts may be taken out of context. She recalls posting an image of a bull elephant being ridden as it is a gentle way of managing them when they are in musth. It caused outrage amongst supporters who are anti-riding and did not have the full context. Another example of supporters questioning elephant management practices is the use of quarantine facilities when new elephants arrive at the sanctuary. Elizabeth sees the value in this before introducing them to the other resident elephants but it sometimes leads to questions and comments from Facebook followers, and through emails, asking why new arrivals cannot make friends straightaway.

There is another Facebook page that Elizabeth maintains where she posts more serious and upsetting information about animal welfare issues. It does not have as many followers and she thinks that the reason why the sanctuary's page is so popular is because it is kept positive.[19]

Having to select and moderate messages to share online both results in knowledge sharing and knowledge restriction. People receive information that they would not otherwise have access to but messages are tailored to audiences and some information is withheld or edited so that it cannot be taken out of context causing negative feelings towards the sanctuary. This also demonstrates that some of the people following the sanctuary hold very strong opinions based on preconceived ideas which the sanctuary has to manage.

While Elizabeth has not consciously engaged in a marketing campaign or strategy, an argument could be made that she does participate in the attention economy in which she is competing to have her messages heard. The attention economy is described by Herbert A. Simon as

> "...in an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What

[19] Barua (2014, p. 567) observed a similar situation in a UK based elephant charity where negative information about elephants had to be edited out of messaging thus 'packaging' elephants as a commodity for consumption.

> information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it." (cited by Hepburn (2014, p. 42))

Some NGO's have found that having people 'like' their page on Facebook has not helped them to achieve their goals (Obar, 2014, pp. 224-225). The term 'Slactivism' has been coined to describe the scenario where someone follows an organisation or clicks 'like' but does not follow this up with further action (Bower, 2014; Obar, 2014, p. 225). Thrall, Stecula, and Sweet's (2014) study of human-rights NGO's found that internet technologies do not overcome a major hurdle in raising global awareness- that of getting people to pay attention, and a disadvantage of campaigning online is that movements are perhaps easier to join and leave (van de Donk et al. 2004; Bennett, 2004 in Ackland, 2013). Even Facebook alone "bundles together multiple functions and potential things to do" (Morris, 2009, p. 16) which serves as another observation of the problem of attracting and holding people's attention in the era of the attention economy.

At the start of this project in early 2013, the number of 'likes' on the sanctuary's Facebook page was approximately 17,000. Toward the end of 2015 it had grown to over 55,000, and by mid-2017 the number was over 81,000. Elizabeth observed that while the number of Facebook supporters has grown, the number of 'likes' per post has not increased at the same rate. Sanctuary guest, Emma, explained that this is a strategy that Facebook has put in place meaning that only a portion of people who like the page will receive posts in their newsfeed. This is to encourage businesses to pay for sponsored posts and the only way around it is for each person following them on Facebook to individually change their settings for receiving the posts so that they 'follow' the sanctuary as well as 'like' it. This change in algorithm by Facebook is also documented by Held (2014) as a challenge to fundraising for non-profit organisations. Facebook officials have responded to this claim that the change in algorithm was to present content most relevant to users' interests (Held, 2014).

While 'likes' may not lead to more meaningful action, they can be an indicator of the amount of exposure an organisation has. Cohn (2013) suggests that when someone 'likes' something on Facebook, that individual contemplates that post/comment/image for an average of seven seconds and when it appears in others' newsfeeds, close friends will contemplate their 'liking' of that item for a further five

seconds each which further highlights the extent to which organisations are competing for attention in the attention economy. 'Liking' and 'sharing' information, however, raises awareness of an organisation and the bigger the network, the further the messages are spread (Rodriguez, 2016, p. 324). The larger the network (or number of followers in the age of Facebook) the more legitimate the organisation also appears to be (Blumer, 1971 in Rodriguez, 2016, p.324).

A Networked Community?

The elephant sanctuary often refers to their Facebook following as a community. Reich (2010, p. 703) however, discusses the psychological sense of community on social networking sites such as Facebook and concludes that while these sites are regularly referred to as online communities, they more closely resemble networks of individuals. An online community, on the other hand, involves a group of people that form relationships and emotional connection through conversations about a shared interest (Rheinold, 1993 in Ackland, 2013). In 2007, boyd and Ellison observed that sites such as Facebook are different to earlier online communities, which took forms such as discussion forums on specific topics, because they are structured around individuals rather than groups of people with shared interests (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 219). Subsequent developments to Facebook have allowed for people to form groups, and for people and organisations to create pages tailored to specific interests which means that on one level Facebook facilitates the creation of communities of individuals with common interests while at the same time being networked individuals. Another possibility is that the online following of an organisation be defined as an 'Affiliation Network' where all members have a shared interest but do not necessarily interact directly with each other (Ackland, 2013, p. 73).

Facebook has the functionality for creating threaded conversations in which people reply to each others' comments but in the case of the elephant sanctuary's Facebook page, the comments on posts are not typically 'conversations' that build on each other but more often individual comments which is suggestive of a form of network (Hansen et al., 2010b; and Resnick et al., 2005 in Ackland, 2013) rather than community.

Organisations with Facebook pages that act as networks for sharing information are more likely to mobilise a larger number of people to act (Ackland, 2013) which in the case of the elephant sanctuary means mobilising people to provide moral and financial support to the sanctuary. Rodriguez' (2016, p. 327) study, on the other hand, described the sharing of information through social media channels as building a community by gathering sources, creating events, providing recognition, and inviting people to participate in actions offline. The Facebook page for the elephant sanctuary can also be thought of in the context of an "exchange network" where support is provided to and/or provided by, the network (Milardo, 1992 in Allan, 2006 p.660).

The connections formed online are complex in relation to existing academic models and for this reason, John Postill (2008, 2011 in Postill and Pink, 2012, p.130) warns against thinking in terms of either network or community as it oversimplifies the complexity of relationships, which can also be seen in the sanctuary's Facebook following.

Fieldwork Participants and Facebook Use

Of Group A, both Mary and Laura intended to keep following the sanctuary on Facebook and, as mentioned previously, Laura was particularly keen to find out what would happen in the story of two bull elephants that began during their stay. Of Group B, Amanda and Tim were not Facebook users but Sandra and Emma were. Emma said that she would pay closer attention to their activities on Facebook following her stay. No-one in Group C was following the sanctuary on Facebook at the time of their visit. On being asked if they would start following their stay, they respond positively but Isla qualified this by saying she was not a big Facebook user. It transpired however, that the group had prior knowledge about individual elephants before their stay. While planning the trip, Isla had researched information about the sanctuary from other websites and sent emails to Olivia and Natalie. Natalie is a Facebook user and on one of the morning walks she described a photo she posted of her and a popular elephant with a caption about not riding, no ivory and no cruelty. Elizabeth was delighted by this and Natalie showed us the post on her phone. Of the nine guests at the fieldwork site, only four made publicly visible comments on the

sanctuary's Facebook posts following their stay and these are discussed in the following chapter.

Nadkarni and Hofmann's (2012) review from a psychological perspective, summarised that the way people use Facebook is influenced by personality traits such extraversion and introversion, as well as cultural and socio-demographic factors. Socio-Demographic information about the sanctuary's Facebook following has not been collected for the purposes of this study however, it should be noted that posts are written in English and the majority of comments posted by their followers are in English.

TripAdvisor and Consumer Reviews

One evening during my fieldwork, an award from TripAdvisor arrived in the mail although Elizabeth does not like to direct people to TripAdvisor anymore because of some negative reviews. Previous studies have not reached consensus on the importance of consumer reviews in influencing other's travel planning behaviour. Constantinides' (2014, p. 48) argues that in a corporate marketing environment, product reviews by other customers are perceived by audiences as reliable and people believe that their peers write sincere accounts of their experiences. This is, perhaps, because they believe that their peers do not stand to make a financial gain from making their recommendations (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2007 in Cox, Burgess, Sellitto & Buultjens, 2009, p.747).

A study of users of TripAdvisor in travel planning showed that reviews left by other travellers were an important source of information for those planning travel and reviewers were perceived as either more or less reliable depending on factors such as experience and similarity to the reader (Gretzel, 2007 in Cox et.al., 2009, p. 748-9). On the other hand, the study carried out by Cox et.al. (2009) concluded that official travel websites were regarded as more reliable than consumer reviews as sources of information though consumer reviews are complementary to other sources of information. They add that the discrepancy in results is likely due to how participants were recruited as some studies surveyed existing TripAdvisor users whereas other studies' samples included non-users.

Guest groups B and C both raised the topic of TripAdvisor reviews during their stay. In both conversations the conversation centred on negative reviews left by

previous guests, perhaps because these seemed incongruous compared to their own views. In conversation with Group B, Elizabeth said that she does not take negative reviews personally anymore (she used to) because often people were complaining about trivial matters (Sandra and Emma also agreed that they sounded trivial). Elizabeth has observed that no-one had written a review that said the animals were badly treated so in terms of the core values of the sanctuary, she was not concerned about the criticisms. The conversation started a long-running joke between Sandra, Emma and Elizabeth about how they were going to deduct stars from their TripAdvisor review for really trivial things revealing the potential for such review websites to be manipulated.

On being asked whether guests who have left negative reviews were motivated to visit by the opportunity for elephant encounters, Elizabeth hypothesised that they have perhaps seen the 5-star rating and mistaken it to mean 5-star accommodation rather than a 5-star experience being rated. Elizabeth does have some ideas for renovating the cabins but she said that if she had the spare funds, the priority would be to spend them on elephants. In this example, Trip Advisor provides a feedback loop and the feedback is assessed against organisational goals and values.

In a conversation with Group C, Olivia shared her experiences of visiting a vegan resort where people wrote reviews criticising the food for being vegan! This motivated her to post a positive review in response. Both the examples of negative reviews of the sanctuary and Olivia's experience of reviews of the vegan resort suggest that for these participants, TripAdvisor reviews have been considered in travel planning, but have lacked reliability.

The previous research discussed here has tended to focus on the affordances, challenges and value of social media use such as Facebook by both NGOs and commercial enterprises from an organisational point-of-view. Very few have offered a qualitative analysis of how followers interact with an organisation's Facebook content. The following chapters intend to take the analysis of Facebook use one step further and look at the relationship between the sanctuary and Facebook users in more detail, as well as the relationships that Facebook followers form with the elephants in the sanctuary's care.

Chapter 5

Facebook Interactions

This chapter introduces the possibility that multispecies ethnography and internet-*related* ethnography can be combined to conduct multispecies ethnography in virtual as well as physical spaces.[20] This chapter attempts to carry multispecies ethnography from a physical site to a mediated virtual site where the *becomings* of humans through their interactions with elephants are not forged through sensory affective encounters of custodial labour and observing elephants in a forest habitat. Rather the *becomings* that are formed in virtual spaces are mediated by representations, narratives and people's imaginations. The sanctuary represents elephants on Facebook by curating images and narratives to share on Facebook which people respond to, interact with, and extend by adding their own interpretations and imagined narratives.

Barua (2014) argues that elephants are cosmopolitan animals through connections that are formed by their circulation and movement through different contexts. Barua offers the example of the London elephant parade in which fiberglass elephants were displayed around London and became commodities that created conservation awareness and generated funds for elephant corridors in India. This Barua argues, is evidence that elephants are cosmopolitan animals as they generate links between nations and cultures, and also evidence of the configuration of elephants for consumption. The example of the sanctuary's Facebook page demonstrates a way in which Facebook and Facebook users also play a role in configuring elephants as cosmopolitan animals that transcend national boundaries, and enter different cultures.

This chapter describes a selection of Facebook posts posted by the sanctuary and how other Facebook users interacted with these. It gives a brief overview of the information or narrative being conveyed in each of the sanctuary's posts as well as discussing their relative impact in terms of the numbers of 'likes',

[20] Whatmore and Thorne (2000) have also conducted a study in which elephants exist in virtual and physical spaces. In their study, which draws on Actor-Network Theory, African elephants occupy and are circulated through virtual space in computer records maintained by zoos about breeding and lineage, compared with as subjects of conservation programmes in wild habitats.

'comments' and 'shares' they attract. It further unravels the significance of posts by examining the ways in which people respond to information and stories about elephants through the comments sections. Through analysis of these exchanges, themes emerge that reveal attitudes towards elephants, experiences of curiosity and wonder about elephants, conceptualisations of elephants as non-human persons and, emotional responses to information about elephants. In engaging with stories and information about elephants, commenters reveal themselves as creators of narratives about elephants, as members of a networked community with shared values about elephant welfare, and they reveal that the sanctuary is a virtual sanctuary for people as well as a physical space for elephants. In both anthropomorphising and showing reverence for elephants, they reveal perceptions of the personhood of elephants as also being networked individuals, and in some cases, as being better-than-human.

Cvijikj and Michahelles' (2011, p. 1) proposal for the study of Facebook trends identifies three types of Facebook posts. 'Disruptive events' (for example, a catastrophe Facebook users respond on a global scale), 'popular topics' (such as popular brands and celebrities), and 'daily routines' or 'day-to-day life'. This chapter employs the same system for categorising the sanctuary's Facebook posts but on a much smaller scale than that proposed by Cvijikj and Michahelles.

The 'Disruptive events' are discussed first and include the deaths of two elderly elephants and the arrivals of two new elephants. In this section I argue that the sanctuary's practices around burials and rescues of elephants constitute ceremonies and rites with elephants as the subjects, and that this is endorsed by, and is significant for, the sanctuary's Facebook followers. 'Popular topics' include memories and updates about popular elephants as well as veterinary care of elephants. In this section, I discuss the way in which followers constitute a community of care for elephants. 'Daily routines' presents examples about one elderly elephant's daily life at the sanctuary from which it is possible to further deduce what 'sanctuary' means as a place of peace, choice, and safety for elephants, and Part 5 gives a brief overview of posts that attracted noticeably less participation on Facebook.

While the different types of post by the sanctuary, and the ways in which Facebook users have interacted with these posts, have been described separately in this chapter, there are a number of themes that reoccur in the comments sections

for the different post types. Throughout the chapter there are examples of the ways in which elephants are anthropomorphised by the sanctuary and other Facebook users, however, far from being critical of this practice, I argue for the practice of anthropomorphism as recognition of the personhood of elephants, and as being important to the creation of meaning for Facebook users. Anthropomorphism is manifested in a number of ways in Facebook interactions, not only as elephants as subjects of funeral rites and rites-of-passage (defined below), but also through imagined conversations between elephants, and comparisons of elephant behaviour to human behaviour. The practice of comparing animal behaviour to human behaviour in order to draw understandings of animals has been observed by Berger (1980, p. 2 cited in Curtin, 2010, p.150) who argues that humans project their own interpretations of animal worlds as animals cannot speak to us, and in doing so, we also learn about humans.[21] In the discussion below, some commenters draw comparisons between elephants and humans, not only to try and understand the inner life of the elephant, but also because of actual similarities between humans and elephants such as life-span. Some commenters also describe elephants in ways that suggest they recognise personhood in elephants or regards elephants as better-than-human and as beings that humans could learn from. The idea of humans learning from animals about emotional states such as forgiveness and compassion has previously been recognised by Bekoff (2007, p. 109) and elephants are conceptualised as better-than-human by some commenters who interpret their behaviour as being morally superior to humans, or by being better emotionally adapted than humans by showing what they interpret as signs of forgiveness in a situation where they perhaps consider that many humans would not be forgiving.

This chapter also demonstrates the practice of narrating in creating engagement and the role of readers as producers of narratives who respond to commentary and captioning of the sanctuary in forming their own imagined biographies of individual elephants.

Facebook posts by the sanctuary always include written text with a photograph, or a series of captioned photographs, or a short video. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sanctuary's Facebook page was being maintained by Elizabeth and one other person at the time of this study. As it is not always possible

[21] The anthropomorphising of animals by relating animal behaviour to human behaviour has also been observed in dolphin encounters in a tourism context by Amante-Helweg (1996, cited in Curtin (2010, p.150)).

to determine the author of the posts being discussed, 'the sanctuary' is often used to denote authorship of the posts. There are also challenges to establishing whether people posting comments on the sanctuary's posts are regular followers of the page (that is, that they have 'liked' the sanctuary's page as a whole and regularly receive the sanctuary's posts in their newsfeeds) or whether they are not followers but have perhaps had a single post appear in their newsfeed (perhaps because a Facebook friend has interacted with or shared the post) and have posted a comment. As a result, the term 'commenters' is often used to describe those people who write comments on the sanctuary's posts. In some of the examples discussed below it is evident that people have been interacting with the sanctuary over a longer period of time and the term 'follower(s)' is used in these cases.

Part 1 - Grieving for Elephants Online

The highest impact post in terms of numbers of both 'likes' and 'comments' was the announcement of the death of a popular, elderly, female elephant who we will call Naiyana. This event attracted significantly more participation from the sanctuary's Facebook following than any other post in the study. The second most significant event was the death of an elderly, male elephant, who we will call Somporn, a few weeks later. Both elephants were given funerals and the details were shared on Facebook with photo albums depicting the burial ceremonies. In both cases, the burial ceremonies could be described as funeral rites or rites-of-passage. Rites-of-passage is a term first coined by Belgian anthropologist, Arnold van Gennep to mean "those rites which accompany the passage of the individual from one situation to another, from one world (cosmic or social) to another." (Cited in Starr, 1910, p. 707). van Gennep described the ceremonies associated with rites-of-passage as usually having three main stages which are translated as 'separation', 'transition', and 'incorporation' (van Gennep, 1960, p. vii) though these categories can also be considered different types of rites in which funerals are rites of separation (Barnard & Spencer, 2009, p. 616).

In Thailand, the word *lom* is used to describe the death of an elephant which means to 'to topple or keel from an upright position' (Haas, 1976 in Ringis, 1996, p. 59) and it is common place for elephants to be given a funeral. Schliesinger (2010, p. 112), for example, gives the following description of mourning for an

elephant that died in an elephant camp in Thailand in 2001: "The whole mahout community living there mourned the dead elephant as if were a deceased person. All the mahouts and their family members visited the body of the deceased at an empty spot behind the camp, sitting around the corpse on bamboo mats, paying their respects to the dead animal and to its owner." Two Buddhist monks also visited and blessed the elephant in the mourning practices described by Schliesinger. This description bears resemblance to the burial practices at the sanctuary when an elephant dies.

When elephants die at the sanctuary, a funeral is held for them presided over local monks and they are then buried in the sanctuary[22] in a grave lined with flower petals. Before burial, flowers are placed in their curled-up trunks and people pay their respects. Over breakfast one morning during the fieldwork for this research, Elizabeth told a group of guests and I about the death of an elderly female elephant, who we will call Buaree, who died of old age in the sanctuary. The story was told in response to a question from a guest who asked Elizabeth if she thought elephants knew when they were going to die. Elizabeth told us that before Buaree's death she had become weak but then one day strode deep into the forest and died during the night. When they found her, she had her trunk curled up which is a sign, Elizabeth explained, that she had died peacefully.[23] The sanctuary staff and the guests that were staying at the time were all part of the burial proceedings. Some had made bouquets which they placed with her while taking their moment to pay respects. The grave was lined with a bed of rose petals and Buaree was placed on top of them.[24] Some of the guests at the table and I were brought to tears by Elizabeth's description of these events.

Some attention has been paid to the grieving process that pet owners go through when their pet dies (see for example Donohue, 2005; Fiske, 1995; Thomas, 1996; Tully, 1999; Van Loo, 1996) and Pike (2016) describes mourning for the nonhuman amongst environmental activists and the role that this plays in further fuelling activism. Attention has also been paid to how people express their grief or mourn the loss of a person online in the age of social networking (see for example

[22] If they have died of unknown causes or a contagious disease, they are cremated.
[23] Locke (2017a, p. 363) also offers an example from a Nepali elephant stable in which an elderly elephant increasingly absented herself from the stable, and this was understood by her human colleagues as a signal that she would soon pass away, since they knew her final pair of molars were wearing down, making mastication increasingly difficult.
[24] The sanctuary has to hire machinery to dig graves and move bodies of deceased elephants.

Andrew, 2014; Brubaker, Hayes, & Dourish, 2013; De Groot, 2014; Getty et.al, 2011; Marwick & Ellison, 2012; McEwen & Scheaffer, 2013). It appears that there is no existing research, that describes grieving for non-humans through social media though Rothfels (2005, p. 181) describes a memorial webpage for an elephant that died in a sanctuary in the US prior to the rise of social media confirming that grieving for elephants in online environments is not a new phenomenon.

Naiyana and Somporn were neither pets, nor were they people though in many ways they were regarded by the sanctuary and their Facebook followers as having personhood - as sentient, feeling beings with life-histories and there is evidence that people experience or express grief in ways that are comparable to the loss of a pet or a human person.

During my fieldwork, Elizabeth stated that Naiyana was the sanctuary's most popular elephant when posted about on Facebook though rather than having 'celebrity status'[25] because of biographical information shared on Facebook, Elizabeth thought that the reason for Naiyana's popularity was because she was rescued after a previous planned rescue did not work out. The funds that had been donated by followers to rescue a different elephant were instead used to rescue Naiyana and she was the elephant that made everything right again.

Naiyana was aged in her sixties and had been at the sanctuary for just under a year when she passed away. Elizabeth announced the death on Facebook with a link to a blog of her own descriptive account of Naiyana peacefully passing away. In the post, Elizabeth shared her own grief by describing the difficulty of compiling the post which included 23 images depicting Naiyana's burial and this mirrored the burial practices described when Buaree died. The images showed the deceased elephant, a butterfly that rested on her body, the placing of flowers in her curled-up trunk, people saying good bye, the funeral presided over by local monks, and a photo of her burial site. Each image attracted its own comments and likes, and the main post received 4351 'likes', 1367 shares, and 1658 comments. A few days after Naiyana's death, the sanctuary posted a video tribute. The video was over 15 minutes long and was a compilation of photos and video previously posted on Facebook. It included images from before her rescue and her time at the sanctuary. The video was viewed over 16,000 times, received over 2000 'likes', and attracted over 370 comments.

[25] See for example, the discussion on Susan Nance's writing on elephant celebrity in the introduction.

The second most significant Facebook post in terms of interaction was the death of elderly, male elephant Somporn a few weeks later. Somporn had been a long-standing resident of the sanctuary and belonged to Elizabeth's husband's family before the sanctuary was founded. Somporn's death fell on the same day as the accidental deaths of some of the sanctuary's dogs and all of these events were announced together. Somporn was buried according to the same practices described for Buaree and Naiyana, and images documenting this were included in the post. In the comments, the sanctuary posted a link to the blog entry about the deaths, and to Somporn's biography on their website. The reactions to these announcements from the sanctuary's Facebook following share many similarities although the post announcing the death of Somporn attracted significantly less participation than Naiyana's death, receiving only 650 comments.

The most significant theme in Facebook users' responses to Naiyana's death was one of gratitude to the sanctuary that she had a good 11.5 months with them before passing away. A few added that they wish she had been able to experience this for longer and a number of followers indicated that they experience mixed emotions such as being both sad at her passing and happy that she experienced love at the sanctuary. In some of the comments on the individual images, commenters also thanked her mahout and the monks chanting for her funeral. That many people expressed gratitude for the sanctuary's actions towards Naiyana suggests that they see the sanctuary as acting on their behalf and representing their values. Further evidence of this appeared in the comments on an image of someone placing flowers in Naiyana's 's curled-up trunk (a practice that Elizabeth described as a symbol of the sanctuary staff's 'endless love'). A commenter thanked the person in the image for doing what they were unable to do themselves and this comment was liked by 13 other people. In a similar example, one person commented on the post announcing Somporn's death, and that the sanctuary does what lots of people around the world wish they could do. Followers expressed their admiration for sanctuary staff with terms such as 'amazing people' and a number of followers believed that the knowledge that the elephants had happy lives should have brought the sanctuary staff comfort. There is an element of searching for something positive to say in these comments and Davis (2001, p. 147) suggests that looking for positives during times of grief is a way that people may compensate for not being able to make sense of loss.

In addition to expressing gratitude, some followers offered condolences to the staff at the sanctuary and a few singled-out the mahouts of each of the deceased elephants for special condolences which indicates an awareness of the bond between mahout and elephant. Some comments were phrased as to offer condolences to the sanctuary whereas others were written as though they were grieving with the sanctuary. For example, in the case of Somporn's death, a follower described the loss as being both the sanctuary's and 'ours', also hinting at a reference to the wider network of the sanctuary's supporters. Some commenters shared their personal emotional responses using terms like 'crying', 'sad', or 'heartbroken' to describe their feelings.

The ascribing of rituals to events is an indicator of the significance that humans place on them. Monica Wilson (1954, p.241) cited in (Turner, 1969. p.6) argues that. "Rituals reveal values at their deepest level...men express in ritual what moves them most..." In the examples of rituals around elephant funerals it becomes evident that rituals are both born out of meaning and create deeper meaning. They can create affective responses to events by demonstrating the significance of those events to a wider audience. Some commenters shared that they had emotional responses to the elephants' funerals because the funerals demonstrated the sanctuary's love for the elephants. In one example, a photo from the post about Somporn's death was captioned by Elizabeth with a statement about how much Somporn was loved by the people at the sanctuary and this received 247 likes - a comparatively high number for a single image. Another example is Emma's comment on an image of Naiyana's burial on which she said: "Beautiful and oh so sad xx".

Through their comments, a number of followers revealed their own religious or spiritual beliefs and personal practices around death and grieving - particularly in response to Naiyana's death. Religious or spiritual beliefs were indicated through references to God, karma, angels and the afterlife. Some mentioned seeing Naiyana on 'the other side' and one commenter wondered what form she would take when she is re-born. Someone commented that they believed Naiyana 's spirit would remain at the sanctuary, whereas another believed that she is in heaven. For example, on the post with the video tribute to Naiyana, Mary commented "This is the best thing I've ever seen...I bet she's up there looking down on you all...Sweet dreams lovely (Naiyana). Miss you much xxxx..." Religious or spiritual practices that were mentioned by commenters included an intention to pray

for Naiyana. One follower said that she would meditate, offer merit, and practice reiki. Two commenters, indicated an intention to visit her grave when visiting the sanctuary which is suggestive of personal pilgrimage to pay respects.

Elizabeth's post about Naiyana's death described the presence of a butterfly at the time of her death and photos of the butterfly were included in the album of images in the Facebook post. This was significant for a number of followers who interpreted the presence of the butterfly as being particularly symbolic. Some commenters conceived of the butterfly as a spiritual guide or the spirit of an another elephant,some interpreted as a symbol of transformation, and other suggestions for what the butterfly symbolised included peace, love, company and beauty.

A number of people wanted to understand the causes of the elephants' deaths and Marwick and Ellison (2012, pp. 389-390) also found that this question came up frequently in their study of online memorial pages for people. In Naiyana 's case, the answer given by the sanctuary was that she died of old age and having had a hard life. The sanctuary's answer is interesting because while she had lived to old age, it alludes to her welfare prior to being rescued by the sanctuary being a contributing factor in her death. Possibly without seeing this exchange in the comments, a few other commenters were curious about the impact her life before the sanctuary had on her death and whether abuse or work strain were contributing factors. One commenter was convinced that there was direct correlation between her working life and her death revealing a strongly held attitude about welfare for working elephants in Thailand.

A small number of people sought knowledge about other elephants' grieving practices. They queried whether the other elephants would get to say goodbye or wondered how they were reacting. Naiyana was a relatively solitary elephant at the sanctuary and was not in a 'herd' or group whereas Somporn had a small 'family group'.[26] One person commented that Somporn's family group would be devastated and other followers wanted to know if the other elephants were grieving and got to say goodbye. Elephant rituals around death and grieving (more often documented for African elephants than Asian elephants) have fuelled fascination with elephants and been used in arguments that animals have personhood and are 'like us' in popular writing and media stories (see for example Honeyborne (2013)).

[26] 'Family group' is in inverted commas because the elephants in this group are not genetically related but the group comprised of Somporn, an older female elephant, a teenage elephant, and a young elephant, thus resembling the composition of a nuclear family.

This theme in the comments indicates that people reading the sanctuary's posts are aware of elephant practices around death and grieving, and are interested in how this applies in the sanctuary setting.[27]

During my fieldwork, Mary said that before coming to the sanctuary, Naiyana was her favourite elephant because of her story and there is evidence in a number of comments at the time of Naiyana's death that the story of her rescue by the sanctuary 11.5 months earlier was a meaningful event for people and signalled the beginning of their emotional investment in her life-story. One follower said that they loved her from the first photo they saw of her and watched her transformation, and another was so moved by her rescue story that they 'adopted'[28] her and were hoping to meet her. Another mentioned that they had hoped to receive updates about her for years to come.

A number of comments confirmed that people only knew about Naiyana and Somporn through Facebook rather than through having visited the sanctuary in person. One person shared that they felt they lost a friend when Naiyana died because the sanctuary is so good at Facebook posts which also confirms the possibilities of Facebook interactions for creating feelings of care and belonging in the absence of 'real life' encounters. Another commenter noted that although they had not visited the sanctuary, they felt that they knew the elephants through reading updates daily.

Some comments were addressed directly to the deceased elephants and the behaviour of addressing messages directly to the deceased is also observed by Marwick and Ellison (2012) and Dobler (2009) in mourning people online. Laura and Mary both wrote messages directed to Naiyana expressing gratitude for the opportunity to meet her. Laura wrote: "... This is so sad. I'm so grateful I got to meet you this year in elephant paradise, where you should always have been. I'll never forget. Rest in peace xxx" and Mary wrote: "I'm so thankful that I got to meet you .... Love you. Sweet dreams. Lots of love to you all...xxx" .

Although the event of Somporn's passing received less attention online than Naiyana's, a notable difference that could be seen in the responses to Somporn's death is that some commenters had previously been guests at the

[27] Another example of elephant grieving in the sanctuary was the grieving process of Lawan, a female elephant whose calf died tragically a few years ago. During my fieldwork, Lawan found her calf's tyre in the pond and Elizabeth also shared images of this on Facebook.

[28] In this instance 'adoption' most likely means that they have committed to making a regular financial contribution to her care.

sanctuary and had meaningful encounters with him whereas guests could observe Naiyana from a distance but she was not an elephant that visitors interacted with. One person shared that they had given him a scrub one morning and said that they were particularly saddened by his death. Another commenter had been able to see him quite close, and someone else described being in awe of him when they met him. Laura posted a comment that described in detail the affective response she had to encountering Somporn in person:

> "I'm so sorry it's difficult to put into words. We made friends with all those beauties on our trip this summer and were just discussing the profound effect our visit to (the sanctuary) has had on our lives. Thank you for being there and giving these animals the life and home they deserved to have all their lives. I had my first Elephant interaction with (Somporn), on the morning of our first walk as we stood on the path waiting for the eles to pass (Somporn stopped and looked straight at me. I was so awed it was all I could do not to cry looking into his eyes and then he carried on, for the rest of the trip we mainly watched him from a distance playing and cooling down in the water, it was perfect he was happy. You are in our hearts xx"[29]

A few days after each of the announcements of the deaths, the sanctuary invited followers to share their memories of the deceased elephant. For Naiyana, this invitation was included in the post with the video tribute. In Somporn's case, followers had already been sending in their pictures of him so the sanctuary created a post inviting people to continue sending them in. Inviting this level of interaction on Facebook is unusual for the sanctuary but responding to the behaviour of their followers in this way, indicates acknowledgment of a shared grieving process with people online and the role of recalling memories as part of a cognitive grieving process (Martin and Doka, 2000 in Dobler, 2009, p. 186).

In the comments on the post about photographs of Somporn, there was an emphasis on the importance of memories. Memories were regarded as a way of honouring him and followers commented on the need for keeping memories alive and offered thanks for the sharing of memories. The emotion expressed in response

[29] Rothfels (2005, p. 181) also writes of the significance that people place on elephant eyes describing the plethora of images of elephant eyes in the media and encounters that mention eyes.

to these events cover a range of experiences from commenters. Naiyana's death attracted more attention on Facebook but in some regards, the death of Somporn attracted a more intense reaction as previous guests initiated the sharing of their photographs of him and their descriptions of affective encounters with him were more detailed. While it is not possible to establish from the data collected what percentage of commenters had met one (or both) of the elephants in person, it is clear that some had had real life encounters at the sanctuary, some had become emotionally invested in the elephants' stories through information shared on Facebook and may have made financial contributions or enjoyed a particular post, some see the individual elephants as symbols of their more generic love of elephants, and some were expressing sadness having not previously had a connection either in person or online. Attig (2001, p. 33) argues that it is possible to grieve for people we did not know very well but with less intensity than grieving for a close loved one. Perhaps then, an argument can be made that it is possible to grieve for an elephant without having met them or knowing them very well, as this small sample suggests.

It is not uncommon for strangers to participate in public mourning in online memorial pages for deceased people. Marwick and Ellison (2012, p. 3) make reference to the term 'grief tourism' and DeGroot (2014, p. 79) coined the phrase 'emotional rubberneckers' to describe this behaviour although 'emotional rubberneckers' are not necessarily a negative presence in online memorial groups as those that comment or actively participate in groups usually feel that they are genuinely participating in shared grieving (DeGroot, 2014, pp. 82-83). 'Emotional rubbernecking' as described here may serve as another example of people deliberately seeking to be affected by online interactions as I have argued in the introduction, is a possibility in assemblages involving interactive websites.

For those who did know the deceased, mourning a person online allows an outlet for those wanting to express their emotions and receive group support (McEwen & Scheaffer, 2013, p. 1) and provides an outlet for those who may not have been actively involved in traditional mourning practices such as funeral arrangements (Carroll & Landry, 2010, p. 344).

Van Loo (1996) and Fiske (1995) both argue that the grieving process that people go through when losing a pet, is similar to grieving for the loss of a human companion. While Naiyana and Somporn are neither pets nor human persons, there are some similarities in the online grieving behaviour for these elephants and

grieving online for people which indicates a perception of these elephants by both the sanctuary and other Facebook users as being non-human persons. There are, however, some noticeable differences between grieving for people and grieving for elephants online.

For many of the participants in the studies conducted by Brubaker et al. (2013), Carroll and Landry (2010), Dobler (2009), Getty et al. (2011), and Marwick and Ellison (2012) the creation of, or posting in online memorials for people, is an extension of real-world mourning practices and a way in which mourners can retain an ongoing connection with the deceased though the notion of an ongoing connection is not a strong emerging theme in the comments on the deaths of these elephants. It is also noteworthy that unlike the finding of Marwick and Ellison (2012, p. 391) there is no noticeable trolling behaviour (comments designed to be antagonistic to other participants or the sanctuary).[30] Marwick and Ellison (2012) also describe "context collapse" at times of mourning a human in which mourners from different aspects of the deceased's life share different perspectives of the deceased through having knowing them in different contexts. In contrast, the mourning or grieving for an elephant by the sanctuary's followers does not indicate context collapse as their knowledge of the elephant comes from the same mediated source.[31] In general there appears to be consensus about the characters of the elephants, and similar attitudes towards the sanctuary, while allowing for the sharing of different personal experiences and beliefs. It is uncommon for commenters to openly doubt or question information shared by the sanctuary, and there is no commenting on the validity of others' feelings or appropriateness of beliefs as Marwick and Ellison (2012) have found in memorial pages for people.

The reactions to the deaths of these two elephants also highlights the complexity of trying to define online associations as either networks or communities and further makes the case for the sanctuary's Facebook supporters as members of a networked community. The behaviour of followers on Facebook may align with descriptions of a network, but the content they produce indicates shared emotional experiences which creates a sense of community. This sense of belonging in a networked community is summarised by a single comment on a photo of people

[30] It is possible, however, that if this behaviour had taken place, it was edited or deleted prior to the data collection for this study and it is not known for certain whether the sanctuary edits or curates the comments that are visible on their posts.

[31] This does not suggest however, that there are not other people who grieve the death of the elephant that had met them in a context outside the sanctuary.

gathered for Somporn's funeral. The photo does not attract a large number of comments but one person expressed sadness to see familiar faces grieving and added that there were many people thinking of them around the world.

Part 2 - Rescued

After the deaths of Naiyana and Somporn, the next most significant events in terms of interaction on Facebook were the rescues of two elderly female elephants who we will call Duanphen and Pakpao. While the fundraising for purchasing both elephants happened at the same time, these elephants arrived at the sanctuary at different times and from different circumstances. In the context of the sanctuary, the term 'rescue' means the purchase and relocation of an elephant to the sanctuary though rescued elephants come from a variety of backgrounds and working conditions.

During my fieldwork, I was invited by Elizabeth to join her and members of her team on a road trip to meet Pakpao, as her owners wanted to sell her to the sanctuary. When an organisation contacts the sanctuary to sell an elephant, a team goes to meet the elephant, find out about their situation and background, and what the owners are planning to do with the proceeds from the sale. Elizabeth will not typically buy elephants if the money will be used by the seller to purchase another working elephant as it would be fuelling the trade in working elephants. Elizabeth usually extends the invitation to guests to join them on trips like this but often they decline because they would prefer to spend their time at the sanctuary. The visit to meet Pakpao revealed that some of details were different to what the sanctuary had been told but nevertheless, her situation seemed ideal for a move to the sanctuary.

A short time later the sanctuary was contacted about purchasing Duanphen who was in another city much further away. A team from the sanctuary investigated further and also confirmed the suitability of moving this second elephant, to the sanctuary. Meanwhile, Elizabeth wondered whether it would be possible to raise all of the funds required to purchase both of these elephants as well as some other fundraisers that were on the horizon, and worked long hours one evening preparing material for the launch of the fundraiser. The visits and negotiations for the purchases of Pakao and Duanphen took place over the time that two different groups of guests (Groups B and C) were visiting the sanctuary and both groups were

informed that these rescues were being researched and planned before it became public knowledge via Facebook - providing another example of sanctuary guests being included in a 'behind-the-scenes' view.

The sanctuary launched the fundraising campaign via an established donations website and shared information via Facebook. The fundraising posts on Facebook had relatively low impact in terms of participation, but the fundraising campaign was successful. The campaign included re-posting two videos from the rescue of Naiyana a few months earlier (Naiyana was still alive at the time of the campaign). In the second video she was described by the sanctuary as relaxed and free, and the sanctuary's post said that they would like to be able to do the same for the two prospective rescues adding that there was some urgency to reach the target and a link to the donation page. Each of the videos attracted a relatively low level of interaction but the day after re-sharing the stories of Naiyana's rescue, the fundraising target was reached. While the re-sharing of these posts about Naiyana, which we know from the comments at the time of her death had an affective impact on some people, and reaching the fundraising target for the new rescues happened within a short space of time, it cannot be confirmed , on the basis of the information available, to whether there is a direct correlation between these events though it is possible that the sanctuary created a narrative with an awareness of the affective impact this would have, and that this would help them to achieve their goals.

When the fundraising target was met, the sanctuary posted two messages on consecutive days. The first post expressed thanks and praised supporters, and explained that it would take a while for the rescues to be organised. The post included a video montage as a 'thank you' message to supporters and the video included lots of vocalisations from some of the sanctuary's existing elephants. The narrative offered by the sanctuary was that these were squeaks and trumpets of joy - an example of the sanctuary knowingly anthropomorphising elephants who could not have known that the funding target had been met. It did however, provide an affirmative device and narrative that followers could subscribe to, as well as potentially creating a sense of community in which elephants are also active members. The post the following day said that they hoped the funds would come through soon and that elephants can better express the joy of freedom. It was accompanied by another video of four elephants playing in the pond and trumpeting. In both cases, the videos were viewed over 5,000 times and each of the posts

attracted a comparatively large numbers of 'likes' (696 for the first post and 896 for the second post).

In the comments for these posts, supporters reiterated their willingness to help, offered well wishes for the rescue process, and a number expressed gratitude for being given a way that they could participate. Some shared emotions of joy, excitement or happiness for the new elephants. Sandra, for example, posted "So, so happy for you..and especially [Pakpao and Duanphen]...what a wonderful place and how much they're coming to!...", and there were some comments from supporters who had contributed to the funds and had been waiting for news that the target had been met. There were also indications from these Facebook interactions that commenters had already become interested in the life-stories of Duanphen and Pakpao. One commenter asked for more of the back-story of the elephants and others looked forward to following their journey, seeing them retire, or meeting them the next time they visit the sanctuary. Some people had started to wonder if the new elephants would make friends with other elephants at the sanctuary.

Duanphen arrived at the sanctuary first. In the post about her arrival, the sanctuary included information about her past careers in the logging and trekking industries, and thanked supporters for bringing about change and saving Duanphen. The post included an album of 48 images showing the conditions she lived in at the trekking camp, being picked up by sanctuary staff, and her arrival at the sanctuary. The main post received over 1500 'likes', was shared over 230 times and attracted over 160 comments. The previous owners were part of the story of Duanphen's rescue and were represented by the sanctuary as good people who wanted the best for her and were emotional about her leaving. The sanctuary's post explained that her former owners would use the funds from the purchase to retire and expressed a hope that they would come and visit her at the sanctuary. Images of her former owners saying goodbye attracted comments about the owners' feelings towards her and their treatment of her. An image of one of her former owners removing her chain for the last time was received as particularly significant for some commenters who interpreted it as symbolising her freedom and some expressed tears of joy at this image. The former owners made religious offerings for a safe journey back to the sanctuary, and one wiped away tears as he fed her bananas on the truck. The majority of those who commented on this aspect of the rescue believe that the owners wanted the best for Duanphen and made the best decision. There was also a

recognition by some commenters that they have probably had a difficult life as well. One opposing view was expressed by someone who wondered how her previous owners could have loved her if they kept her chained up and used a bull hook. This comment perhaps serves as a reminder of a cultural divide between Thai elephant-keepers and the (predominantly) Western supporters' views on elephant welfare.

In the main comments section on the post about Duanphen's rescue, commenters expressed emotions about the rescue such as having tears of joy, and some mentioned looking forward to meeting her on their next visit. For example, Mary commented "...I've cried so much reading all about you! Beautiful girl! Welcome home...". Laura also commented: "This is the best news. I'm so happy for her xxx". Laura's post led to a conversation between Laura and Mary in which they both expressed a wish to return to the sanctuary and meet Duanphen. The top comment on one of the posts about Duanphen's arrival (receiving 23 likes from other followers) stated that everyone should be touched by the rescue because she has had bad experiences, along with many other elephants, but only a few get the opportunity to be free. This comment, which appeared to resonate with a number of other followers, suggests that the overcoming of hardship leads to a more intense emotional engagement with the elephant's story.

A number of commenters wrote messages of welcome to the new arrival and an image of Duanphen near the sanctuary's main 'welcome' sign on her first morning attracted a particularly large number of 'likes' - perhaps because the juxtaposition was interpreted as symbolic. Two followers welcomed Duanphen to the intangible with one welcoming her to 'happiness' and another welcoming her 'our love'. This suggests that Duanphen was not just welcomed to the locale of the sanctuary, but that her moment of arrival was also the point at which she joined the sanctuary's networked community from the point of view of these followers.

One commenter described Duanphen's departure from the elephant camp as a 'farewell ceremony' and it could be argued that the sanctuary's practices around rescuing elephants is another way in which elephants are subjects of ceremonial rites-of-passage. Elephants as subjects of rites-of-passage in an interspecies community has been studied in depth by Piers Locke in the context of training young elephants in a Nepali elephant stable and this is the subject of a film "Servants of Ganesh" (2010). In the context of elephant rescues in the community of the sanctuary it could be argued that in applying van Gennep's model described above

separation is the process of the elephant leaving their previous owners, the *transition* is the journey to the sanctuary in which the elephant is in a liminal state, and *incorporation* is the welcoming of the new elephant to the sanctuary with a symbolic buffet. The sanctuary has a tradition of welcoming new elephants with a buffet of fruit and vegetables laid out in the shape of a heart and the first images of Duanphen enjoying the welcome buffet were received by some followers with tears of joy. For some commenters the heart shape was interpreted an important symbol. The notion of the rescue as a rite-of-passage is reinforced through other symbolism and cues for interpretation of images included in the sanctuary's depiction of the story. Some images were attributed symbolic value by the sanctuary, whereas other images were attributed symbolic value by readers. For example, an image of Duanphen with her trunk up as the truck pulled away from her old elephant camp was captioned by the sanctuary as her 'waving goodbye to her old life'. The next image in the sequence showed Duanphen on the truck passing tour buses on their way into the camp and a number of followers considered this image to be particularly significant.

Signs also played a role in the story of Duanphen's rescue by conveying information about her health and welfare. For example, an image of Duanphen's dung was included in the series of images because it signified that Duanphen had a poor diet in the trekking camp. Another example was the inclusion of an image of a bull hook which was received by some followers with messages of disgust and calls for it to be burnt. It is a rare example of an image posted by the sanctuary attracting negative emotions but also reveals a perception of the bull hook as a symbol of cruelty.

The effect generated by an image is determined, in part, by how the image fits into the narrative created by its viewer (Massumi, 2002 in Wissinger, 2007 p.238) and in interactive social media, some users share the narratives that they have created around particular images and the meaning that this has for them. This is evident in the images about Duanphen's rescue described above, and particularly in the updates about her integration into the sanctuary. In the days following Duanphen's arrival, the sanctuary posted three updates. One update described her first morning at the sanctuary, another featured a video with images of her rescue and thanking everyone for their support, and the third post two days later, included a photo album of her second day at the sanctuary. In the comments sections on these posts, some Facebook users created their own narratives about Duanphen as they

both responded to cues from the sanctuary about interpreting elephant emotions and behaviour, and also offered their own interpretations of the images and episodes shared online.

In particular, posts that showed interactions between elephants sparked the curiosity and imaginations of some commenters, and evoked empathetic and emotional responses. In a post that shared a lot of photos of interactions between Duanphen and other sanctuary elephants, a number of people posted comments with their interpretations of what might be happening in the interactions, and these interpretations often took the form of imagined conversations between the elephants. One image, for example, showed Duanphen and another of the sanctuary's elephants facing each other a few metres apart. One person interpreted this as stand-off whereas another thought of it as Duanphen asking to be friends. In another example, Duanphen encountered two elephants, Lawan and Samorn, and reached her trunk out to them. One commenter imagined this interaction as Duanphen asking for directions to get to the water whereas another imagined the image as Samorn telling Duanphen she has arrived in paradise.

This process of anthropomorphising elephants by imagining their conversations may be an extension into interactive media of an established tradition of talking animals in popular culture, particularly children's films, books, and television. One only has to look at numerous films produced for young audiences by animation companies such as Disney that feature talking animals to realise the extent to which this anthropomorphic behaviour is learned from a young age. A more comparable example for British audiences may be the 1960's television series "Animal Magic" in which Johnny Morris over-dubbed actual footage of animals from Bristol Zoo with voiceovers (McGown, 2003-14). This behaviour may also be indicative of what Fudge (2002a, p. 7) describes as the human fantasy of being able to talk with animals - to unravel the paradox that they are like us because they can communicate but different to us because we are unable to translate it. Fudge suggests another example from popular culture, Dr Doolittle, as evidence of this human desire.[32]

Being able to see elephant interactions online appears to contribute to a desire to visit the sanctuary in person and motivate people to make financial donations. For example, on another post that showed Duanphen interacting with

[32] Evidence of this desire to be able to speak with animals is also found in 'in person' wildlife encounters and this is discussed in Chapter 3.

other elephants, one commenter shared that they had started saving to travel and see the elephants that they had contributed to fundraising efforts for. A further two comments also shared a desire to visit the sanctuary or to meet Duanphen. A similar post that showed elephant interactions inspired offers of financial support. This indicates that as well as fascination with elephant interactions, people feel motivated by the interactions to engage in further action perhaps because of the narratives that they themselves have created, or because the interactions show elephants as communicative beings.

The anniversaries of elephant rescues are celebrated with symbolic buffets of fruit and vegetables for the elephant being celebrated. Sometime after Duanphen's arrival, the sanctuary celebrated the anniversary of Kanda's rescue with a symbolic buffet for the Trio. This was posted on Facebook with a series of 47 images. The main text of the post hinted at a drama unfolding at the buffet but readers would have to look through the images to see what happened. The drama revealed was that the relatively new arrival, Duanphen, came to join in the buffet and there was a series of interactions between her and the dominant elephant of the Trio, Ubon. In the initial interaction the two elephants shoved each other a little bit. The second time they approached each other, the interaction was gentler, then in a further interaction, Ubon gave Duanphen a big shove causing her to run away. The images received comparatively few comments but people made interesting commentary. Some regarded the episode as 'nail-biting' and a number expressed being nervous for Duanphen. Some felt sorry for her and one person pondered that being the new person must feel the same whether you are human or elephant.

In this example, a story-telling technique was employed by the sanctuary to intrigue readers and the story was told through the series of photos that followed. A few people commented on the sanctuary's story-telling technique, another described it as a 'saga', and two people commented that the sanctuary's telling of the story made them feel as if they were there. This discussion about story-telling technique also, it could be argued, demonstrates the sanctuary's awareness of the competition for gaining and sustaining peoples' attention in the attention economy and that they employ strategies of creating posts with affective images and information on which followers can build their own narratives. Not all commenters create narratives from the sanctuary's posts however, and rather than offering their own interpretations, some commenters viewed this post as an opportunity for learning. For example, one

person asked whether there were vocalisations that could be heard (the answer they received was that there were not any vocalisations that could be heard with human ears) and another expressed their fascination at watching elephant social protocol.

On seeing positive outcomes for Duanphen, a number of supporters expressed a sense of validation at having made financial contributions to her rescue. One supporter stated that they were happy to have been part of securing her freedom and another said that were happy to have contributed money. One person shared that they were not able to contribute much while the fundraiser was happening but were pleased that it all added up. Two commenters on one of the posts thanked fellow supporters who contributed and made Duanphen's rescue possible. This reveals that some of the sanctuary's financial supporters do not just contribute money but that they also become invested in the outcome of their contributions and this has meaning for them as one supporter said, they hope that the sanctuary knows what the rescue means to them. It is also noteworthy that before new rescues arrive at the sanctuary, some followers post comments seeking updates about pending new arrivals on otherwise un-related posts.

Although the fundraising to rescue Duanphen and Pakpao took place at the same time, Pakpao arrived at the sanctuary several months later than Duanphen after some significant setbacks. The sanctuary's post about her arrival thanked supporters for standing by them and giving them strength during this time. The post included an album of 38 images showing preparations for her arrival, the journey to the sanctuary, and her arrival. For Pakpao, the welcome ceremony appeared more significant as a moment of transformation than it did for Duanphen's rescue. Her life prior to being rescued was probably more difficult than Duanphen's had been, and she was described as by the sanctuary as having both physical and emotional wounds when she arrived.

A number of commenters took interest in Pakpao's physical condition and offered suggestions for treatments to help her. Some commented on her need to gain weight, someone noted that they thought her toenails were too long, and one person hoped that good nutrition would help improve a vision problem that the sanctuary described. One commenter suggested a product that might help with a sunburn wound, and another suggested an oil massage to help her dry skin and alleviate itching. Pakpao was also described by the sanctuary as recovering slowly from emotional wounds and had not been interested in interacting with other

elephants. A few commenters responded to this information with their belief or hope that she would learn to trust again because of the care and effort that the sanctuary would put in. Some believed that Pakpao would be able to feel love and that this would heal her. When she first arrived, Pakpao played with some of the decorations that had been put up for her in the quarantine area and some commenters saw this as a sign that she was relaxed and knew that she was safe. Others saw it as a sign that she had a sense of humour.

A number of commenters again offered their interpretation of what they believed Pakpao was feeling. In some of the images, a number of people noticed that she appeared to be crying whereas others believed she was smiling. For example, Emma commented "Hooray. Amazing news and she looks so happy...". It is perhaps because of those differing interpretations that one commenter expressed their wish that Pakpao be able to talk and communicate her feelings reiterating the significance of this desire discussed earlier in this chapter.

There is a sense from observing Facebook exchanges that both the rescues of Pakpao and Duanphen were the beginnings of stories to be followed. Some people who had perhaps been following the sanctuary on Facebook for a while left comments that indicated that they had preconceived ideas about how the new elephants' integrations into the sanctuary would progress as well as the information that the sanctuary would share with them. For example, one person looked forward to seeing Duanphen play in the water, and someone looked forward to hearing her vocalisations. Another two people looked forward to seeing her make friends with other elephants. In the case of Pakpao, commenters looked forward to seeing pictures of her on walks, with her new friends, and out in the green.

In the rescue stories about both Duanphen and Pakpao, a number of people wondered who their mahouts would be. One of the images posted by the sanctuary soon after Duanphen's arrival, showed a mahout leading Duanphen. This prompted questions from commenters about how the relationship between an elephant and mahout is formed and whether they use touch or verbal cues to direct elephants. Another person asked if elephants have a role in choosing their own mahout. These questions reveal an interest in the elephant-mahout bond as a relationship in which both elephants and people make decisions and communicate with each other, and this aligned with Elizabeth's philosophy. Elizabeth explained

during my fieldwork that experience with elephants is not essential to becoming a mahout at the sanctuary and elephants do help to choose their mahouts.

A different example of an anniversary of an elephant rescue that the sanctuary shared on Facebook was the two-year anniversary of Kwanjai arriving at the sanctuary. The post about the anniversary included a video with a selection of images comparing her condition when she arrived to her healthier condition two years on. The post received a lot of attention attracting 1040 'likes', and the video was viewed over 7,000 times. As well as being a transformative experience for Kwanjai, one person explained in the comments that the sanctuary had been transformative for them. They wrote that they had not given elephants much thought before seeing a Facebook post from the sanctuary which caused them to fall in love with elephants and they have subsequently signed petitions and made donations to elephant causes. This comment provides further evidence for the role of information shared on Facebook generating emotion and motivating support for elephant welfare.

Part 3 - Popular Topics

The second category of Facebook post suggested by Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011, p. 1) is that of 'Popular Topics' such as celebrities and brands. In the study of the elephant sanctuary, popular topics includes both popular elephants and the topic of veterinary care of the elephants. 'Popular' elephants, in this instance, is not synonymous with 'celebrity' elephants. While stories or information about particular elephants may attract more attention when posted about on the sanctuary's Facebook page, they are not celebrities in the sense of being well known in the mass media like the examples that Susan Nance writes about.[33]

All of the members of the elephant group called the Trio have wounds or injuries that require daily treatment. The treatments are administered by Elizabeth at approximately the same time each day and guests at the sanctuary are able to watch the treatments taking place. Kanda has open wounds on one foot that were caused by a landmine injury before she was rescued. At the time of conducting field work, the daily treatment regimen for her injuries involved soaking her foot in a bath of magnesium sulphate for a period of time. The wounds were then cleaned out, and

[33] See *Entertaining Elephants: Animal Agency and the Business of the American Circus* (2013) and *Animal Modernity: Jumbo the elephant and the Human Dilemma* (2015).

packed with gauze soaked in mānuka honey.[34] Her foot would then be bandaged and a large sock placed over it and taped on to keep it clean and dry, however, by the next morning, Kanda would have managed to remove the sock and bandaging. To help keep the foot clean and dry, the sanctuary fundraised to have a boot custom made by a company in Australia. The boot is in the style of a shoe and made out of a strong, waterproof material with a thick sole.

Early in the data collection period for this study, the sanctuary posted a series of 5 images of the treatment of Kanda's foot in preparation for the arrival of her boot. The post thanked people for their donations, explained the cause of the injury, and described the need for daily treatment. This post did not attract a lot of participation but people that did comment remarked on Kanda's luck and bravery. One person suggested that Kanda knows that people are helping her and another expressed their anger that she had experienced circumstances that led to the injury though this did not spark discussion from commenters about landmine injuries to elephants.[35]

One evening towards the end of my fieldwork, a large box containing the boot was delivered to the sanctuary. Elizabeth left the box unopened so that Kanda's mahout could open it in the morning. This also allowed for the creation of a short story about Kanda's boot arrival with a series of images of opening the box and putting Kanda's boot on for the first time. Later in the day, we went to the coffee shop in the village with the good internet connection and Elizabeth created a Facebook post with 16 images featuring unpacking and trying on the boot, along with another message of thanks to those who donated towards the boot, and the person that made it. Sometime later we went back to the coffee shop to check how the Facebook post was being received. Elizabeth was delighted that the post had been 'liked' by more than 1200 people. This post provided an opportunity to traverse both the physical and virtual fieldwork sites, allowing an insight into Elizabeth's curating of a Facebook post and her investment in how is was received by the sanctuary's followers. In total, the post received over 1300 'likes', 155 'shares' and 84 comments with each of the 16 photos receiving between 130 and 300 'likes' each. In the comments people offered humorous captions such as describing Kanda as being

[34] Mānuka honey contains an antibacterial component which has medicinal applications (Stephens, 2006)

[35] Elephants and humans as victims of landmine injuries is also the subject of a film called "The Eyes of Thailand"' by Windy Borman (2012).

fashionable, or being like Cinderella. More serious comments expressed gratitude to the sanctuary for their work, and hope that the boot would help with healing her foot. One commenter shared their belief that Kanda must feel the love.

A few months later, the sanctuary posted a new video and description of Kanda's daily foot treatment which included putting on her boot again at the end of the daily treatment regimen. The update included another message of thanks to those who made it possible and stated that the boot had made a big difference to keeping her foot clean. This post received slightly fewer 'likes' than the earlier post on this topic but the video was viewed over 11,000 times, the post was shared 361 times and attracted 139 comments. The increase in interactions with this post may be due, in part, to the number of people following the sanctuary on Facebook increasing during the time in between the posts.

A number of comments expressed affection for Kanda. Two commenters used words such as 'love' and 'adore' to describe their feelings for her. Some commenters described Kanda as patient, and others commented on the love and trust that they believe exist between her and people at the sanctuary. Another pondered whether Kanda knows that she is being helped indicating that they perhaps think about elephant consciousness and the interpretation of events from the elephant's point of view. One person was looking forward to seeing her again which implies an affection for Kanda that was formed during an 'in person' encounter in a previous visit to the sanctuary.

Some commenters showed an interest in the treatment of Kanda's foot itself. They asked questions about the healing process and the products being used in the treatments as well as making suggestions and offering further help. One person suggested using maggots to clean the wound and another offered to send the sanctuary some bandaging supplies. One follower revealed that members of the sanctuary's Facebook following may also belong to other networks concerned with elephant welfare by noting that they know of another elephant in a different facility that might also benefit from a boot.[36] Kanda's anniversary buffet mentioned in Part 2 took place after the arrival of her boot. In the images she was wearing the boot and some followers noticed this. They commented that it looked good and one person shared that they are happy to have contributed.

[36] It is not uncommon for commenters to mention other well-known cases of elephants in captivity.

Another post on a veterinary theme was the anniversary of young male elephant, Charoen's, surgery to remove fragments of a broken tusk. Charoen is the youngest elephant in the sanctuary and it is rare for visitors to be able to get close to him, but Elizabeth says that he is also a popular elephant when posted about online. During one of the regular morning walks during my fieldwork, Elizabeth described to other guests and I, the process of co-ordinating the veterinary surgery required after he broke a tusk off but had remaining fragments in his face that needed to be removed. The surgery required co-ordinating overseas and Thai veterinary expertise. Elizabeth explained that it was the first surgery of its kind performed in Thailand and it was a success.

The sanctuary's post on the anniversary of the surgery consisted of 19 images that showed the surgery, the shards of tusk that were removed, post-surgery care and recovery, photos with his 'family group',[37] and photos of Charoen a year on from the surgery. The post attracted a medium level of interaction with Facebook users (701 likes). The sanctuary followed up in the comments with a thank you message to everyone who made the surgery possible - and for the possibilities that it opened up for other elephants with similar injuries. One person added their wish that all elephants could have the same level of care. Another commenter noted that the post brought back memories for them and it is noteworthy that the sanctuary re-shares posts about their successes and brings back positive memories for followers.

Part 4 - Daily Life

A particular post that could be categorised as 'daily life' was also very popular because it was perceived as humorous. The post was a two minute video of the sanctuary's most popular elephant when posted about online, Naiyana, (some months before her death) scratching herself against a small tree and felling it. The video was viewed over 11,000 times, attracted over 1000 'likes' and was shared over 370 times. A number of commenters found the scenario particularly funny and entertaining, and one shared the opinion that tourists should be more entertained by this than by elephants being forced to perform tricks, revealing their critical views on the use of performing elephant in contrived elephant tourism.

[37] He belongs to the same group of elephants as Somporn - described in Part 1 of this chapter.

Some commented on how Naiyana was enjoying herself and seemed happy, and one commenter noted that no-one tried to stop her which suggests that they view this episode as being indicative of her freedom at the sanctuary. Others made suggestions for solutions to the situation including fundraising for a rotating tree, designing an elephant scratching post, buying drums of moisturising lotions, or rubbing coconut oil into their skin to help with itchiness. Three commenters drew comparisons with human activities with two describing Naiyana's actions as pole-dancing and another comparing it to themselves scratching their back on a door. While some read particular significance into the act of scratching as a sign of something more significant such as freedom, others take at face value but something they can identify with - the mere need to scratch an itch. This episode also highlights how alternative elephant tourism and contrived elephant tourism can be compared and contrasted. The episode generated entertainment value, in part, because of its similarity with human behaviour. However, in the alternative elephant tourism setting, this was coupled with concerns about elephant care and freedom.

Another example of a popular post that showed daily life for an elephant at the sanctuary, was a video of elderly bull elephant, Somchai. The video was two minutes long and showed him having a swim and grazing. The video was viewed over 10,000 times, received nearly 1400 'likes', attracted 120 comments, and was shared over 240 times. The age of this elephant is a key theme that emerged, either directly or indirectly, in the comments. Four people asked why he has large indentations in his forehead and the answer they received from the sanctuary is that it is a natural part of the aging process. Another person asked whether he is the oldest elephant in the sanctuary and how long they live. They received an answer that he is the oldest in the sanctuary's care and that elephants can live past 80 in the wild but often die in captivity in their 60s. Someone said that he looks really good for his age and another person commented that elephants are beautiful regardless of their age.

A second post about Somchai a few days later described him having lots of fresh food and the time to enjoy it. The post included a 20 second video of him eating. This post received much less attention - only 130 likes and approximately half the number of views of the video, but some of the comments suggest that the video reinforced ideas about what it means to live in sanctuary and the lives that the sanctuary's Facebook supporters believe that elephants should lead. For example,

one comment stated that all elephants should have the freedom to eat peacefully without restraints.

Part 5 - Other Posts

Facebook posts about developments around the sanctuary such as improvements to facilities and infrastructure received comparatively less attention than posts about elephants. Two examples of posts about such developments were the creation of night-time enclosures, and the completion of new mahout accommodation.

At the time of conducting fieldwork, the night-time management of the elephants involved tethering them to trees on a long length of chain in a different part of the forest each night. The chains could be broken by the elephants if there was an emergency such as a forest fire. Elizabeth explained that there was a plan to build solar-powered electric fences for night time habitats in the near future. The plan, which was being implemented with another organisation, would mean the elephants would have space to roam at night without chains and Elizabeth noted that it would make a big difference but was not not a perfect solution. The forested area of the nightime enclosure would need time to regenerate on a regular basis so the elephants would need to spend some time on chains and the change would need to be managed.

The sanctuary posted two updates about the new enclosures. The first was during construction and the second was after completion of the project. The post during the construction period showed the Trio in the river having a mud bath while people were putting up the fences for their enclosure. This attracted nearly 800 likes but only 21 comments. The second update, a few weeks later, included a video which showed the Trio exploring their new night-time habitat. The post thanked people involved in the fundraising and construction. It attracted fewer likes (a little over 700) but over 50 comments. A number of the comments asked questions about welfare and elephant management including a query about how they were managed at night-time prior to the new enclosures. One person commented that a true sanctuary does not use chains revealing their strong belief about an aspect of elephant welfare that is perhaps not compatible with the practicalities of managing elephants.

On the elephant behaviour that could be seen in the video, one follower observed that the elephants were exploring something new but did not appear to be afraid, and another person commented that it is good that they have each other for adventures. Someone else interpreted the elephants' vocalisations which could be heard in the video as a sign of their approval.

Another post by the sanctuary on the topic of night-time management of the elephants, was about the completion of mahout houses. Each night, one of the mahouts stays at the sanctuary in case there is an emergency. When the new mahout accommodation was completed, the sanctuary posted a video of Naiyana and her mahout saying 'Thank you' to supporters. The video was viewed over 3,000 times and received over 640 likes but attracted only 18 comments. The comments were positive about the completed project but did not indicate any emotional investment in the development even though Facebook followers had donated to the project. This indicates that followers are less interested in posts concerning humans than those concerning elephants and that information about operation logistics present less opportunity on the part of the sanctuary for engagement with followers.

Part 6 - Discussion

From the examples described above, it is evident that there are some similarities in the way people respond to the sanctuary's Facebook posts, sometimes regardless of the topic of the post. These recurring themes can be placed into over-arching categories. The first concerns Facebook interactions and donations as exchanges of gifts, including expressions of gratitude, representation of values, monetary donations, and shared emotions in an affect economy. The second category discusses in more detail, story-telling techniques employed by the sanctuary to build engagement with their Facebook audience in an attention economy. The third category concerns perceptions of elephants revealed through anthropomorphic behaviours which leads to discussion about the personhood of elephants and ways in which elephants are revered by some people as being better-than-human.

Gratitude, Sharing of Emotion, and the 'gift'

A regularly recurring theme in the responses to information shared by the sanctuary across a number of post types and topics is one of mutual gratitude between the sanctuary and their Facebook supporters. In the examples described in this chapter, a large number of commenters express gratitude to the sanctuary for the work that they do. On the posts about Naiyana's death, people expressed gratitude for the time she had spent at the sanctuary, on the posts about elephant rescues people thank the sanctuary for helping elephants, and the theme of gratitude to the sanctuary appeared again in the comments on posts about Kanda's boot. The sanctuary also regularly expresses their gratitude to supporters in return. Analysing the theme of gratitude reveals that for some followers, the sanctuary represents the enacting of their values and an opportunity to participate in/contribute towards something that is meaningful for them. One person stated this succinctly in a comment that said that they would like to be able to do what the sanctuary does.

A number of commenters thank Elizabeth for sharing her personal emotional experiences and responses to events. For example, some commenters thanked Elizabeth for sharing her personal account when Somporn died and one person noted that Elizabeth's open sharing of her own emotion was helpful for the sanctuary's Facebook followers. Someone else described following the sanctuary as being 'gifted' emotions including love and sadness. Sherry Jr (1983, p. 160) states that: "Virtually any resource, whether tangible or intangible, can be transformed into a gift" and emotions may be a particularly important intangible gift as Frijda and Mesquita (1994, p. 59) argue, emotions have meaning and significance for people. Conceptualising these exchanges of gratitude and emotion as 'gifts' affirms the nature of the interactions between Elizabeth and the sanctuary, and followers, as exchanges with elements of reciprocity and the notion of the sanctuary as a site of an affect economy. French sociologist, Mauss (1954 (1925)) described gift giving as transactions with obligations to give, receive, and reciprocate. The importance of reciprocity in particular as key to gift giving exchanges was later highlighted by (Gouldner, 1960) and the significance of reciprocity can be seen in gift giving exchanges of the affect economy of the sanctuary in which gifts may take different forms. While in this example, the gift is abstract - the invitation to join in feelings, the gift may have monetary value if it is reciprocated with a monetary donation. In another example, a commenter observed that by the sanctuary sharing the lives of the elephants, people send their support back to the sanctuary to do their work. In

this case the stories about elephants shared by the sanctuary and support from Facebook followers are metaphysical gifts that are exchanged. Likewise, Elizabeth views the relationship with the sanctuary's Facebook following as reciprocal and explained that regularly posting updates is the least she can do to make supporters feel like they are part of what is happening or like they are there.[38] Every monetary donation they receive helps and Elizabeth said that many of their financial supporters are not people with a lot of money but they are hard-working and give what they can. She estimates that approximately half of the people who donate to fundraisers have visited the sanctuary in person. This suggests that many of their followers and financial supporters will probably not get the opportunity to visit the sanctuary in person so their relationship with the elephants happens solely through Facebook exchanges. This also highlights the importance for the sanctuary of creating Facebook posts that are meaningful for people or, that people can make meaningful through their interpretations. Exchanges involving monetary donations can also be viewed from the perspective that for donors, the giving of monetary gifts is a symbolic act - a way in which they express meaning (Sherry Jr, 1983, p. 157) and in enacting that meaning, the sanctuary reciprocates the gift. This process of gift exchange results in positive feelings on both sides.

These reflections on sharing in emotion as a gift reveal that the openness of Elizabeth in sharing her emotions in Facebook posts and blogs is an important factor in why others also become emotionally invested in the work of the sanctuary and the lives of the elephants. In commenting on rescue stories and observing elephant integrations, followers reveal emotional responses of love, happiness, compassion, and in some cases, disgust or anger at the conditions of the elephants' previous lives. In contributing to rescues and offering suggestions to solve problems, people show compassion for the elephants - an emotion Ahmed (2004, p. 192) notes, that people feel in response to witnessing suffering. Ben-Ze'ev (2000, p. 329) further argues that people feel compassion when they believe that another person or being is in an unfortunate situation and that the misfortune is not deserved and the emotion of compassion leads to action to help the misfortunate (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, p. 110).

[38] There are instances where accepting donations towards fundraisers is formally tied to other obligations. As part of a fundraiser to purchase more land, the sanctuary committed to planting trees to acknowledge those people who donated over a certain amount. They had to wait for the rainy season to plant the trees and Elizabeth felt that could not ask for more donations until that obligation had been fulfilled.

Disgust may also lead to action, either to distance oneself from the source of disgust (Probyn , 2000, p. 131 in Ahmed, 2004, pp. 94-95) or perhaps to change the situation so that it no longer induces that feeling. This may also be a reason why stories about elephants overcoming hardship tend to generate a strong emotional response amongst Facebook followers. There is evidence the sanctuary's Facebook posts generate emotions that motivate people to want to take action in support of the elephants including making financial contributions to rescues or veterinary care to alleviate hardship, and planning visits to the sanctuary. Facebook posts that show positive outcomes for elephants such as successful rescues, or videos of happy elephants, appear more likely to lead to action from followers such as making donations. Sherry Jr (1983, p. 164) suggests that charisma may also play a role in attracting gifts and this is particularly relevant to a study of donations towards elephant welfare as elephants are known to attract donations and engagement in conservation contexts. Barua (2016) writes of conservation groups using elephants as 'flag ship' species because of their power to attract donations, and Whatmore and Thorne (2000, p. 197) found that using images of elephants in marketing material drew volunteers to Earthwatch programmes.

Story-telling Techniques

There is evidence that story-telling techniques employed by the sanctuary are an important factor in attracting attention and developing engagement on Facebook. For example, one person describes the post about Pakpao's rescue as a "photo essay" and another person commented on the same post that they felt that they were part of the rescue via the photos. The use of images to share stories and information on Facebook also allows the sanctuary to incorporate images that might hold symbolic value. Examples include the photograph of the butterfly on Naiyana's body when she died which some people attributed special significance to, or the photo of the bull-hook at the time of Duanphen's rescue which signified cruelty to some commenters. Some of the narratives themselves include depictions of symbolic acts by the sanctuary such as the preparation of welcome buffets for new rescues or the placing of flowers in the curled-up trunks of deceased elephants. Some commenters have strong affective responses to the sanctuary's practices at times of transformation such as rescues and burials and some of the evidence suggests that

these affective responses may be generated by the sanctuary's demonstration of affection or reverence for the elephants expressed through symbolism, ceremony, and rites.

In some cases images are accompanied by captions with the sanctuary's interpretations and commenters sometimes respond to these by adding their own interpretations which are typically complementary to the sanctuary's commentary rather than contradictory. There is a degree of fascination with interactions between elephants in particular, and Facebook commenters also become story-tellers as they share their interpretations of the meaning of interactions shown in images such as the depictions of Duanphen meeting other elephants soon after her arrival. Examples of commenters interpretations or captions on elephant interactions demonstrate the use imagination to fill in the gaps in the information available to them, and imagination plays an important part in forming emotions (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004, p. 79). Images that show elephants meeting for the first time attract a comparatively high number of affective responses whereas posts where there are fewer interactions between elephants, or elephants and people, attract much less participation.

Cvijikj, Spiegler, and Michahelles (2011, p. 813) found that posts containing videos tended to attract more 'likes' on Facebook than posts with photos and one of the sanctuary's posts in particular, demonstrates the significance of video as a story-telling and information sharing medium on Facebook that generates affect. For example, the sanctuary composed a post about the celebration of the five-year anniversary of Kanda's rescue and included a video of Kanda and another member of the Trio cuddling and squeaking. The post was viewed 9,180 times and received 1056 likes. Some commenters wrote that they appreciated being able to hear the sounds that elephants make and the video appears to have generated a strong emotional response from a number of commenters. One follower said that seeing elephants happy made them feel more in love with them, and the word 'love' appears often in the comments section; some love the video, some express their love the for the elephants, and some comment on the elephants' love for each other. A number of comments also included heart emoticons. Two people expressed a wish to visit the sanctuary which further suggests a correlation between seeing the video and a desire to see the elephants in person. Another two commenters learned new information from the video - one was not aware that adult elephants were playful and another said that before finding out about the sanctuary, they had not seen elephants

behaving this way. The video provides an extra tool for people to learn new information about elephants from a distance and this appears to lead to greater engagement.

Attitudes Towards Elephants and Anthropomorphism

Perhaps the best way to infer of Facebook commenters' attitudes towards elephants is the adjectives that they use to describe elephants. There is a degree of both anthropomorphism and of reverence in the way Facebook followers and commenters talk about the sanctuary's elephants. The qualities with which people imbue the elephants are a combination of human-like qualities and better-than-human qualities which suggests a perception held by some of elephants as beings that morally superior to humans.

Often Facebook users use adjectives to describe individual elephants that suggest a respect for them such as "wise". As with people, wisdom appears to increase with the age of the elephant. It is often used to describe elderly elephants but not the young elephant Charoen. Commenters describing elephants as wise may be drawing on existing understandings of the symbolism of elephants in Asian culture in which elephants are symbols of wisdom (see for example (Gauding, 2009, p. 238) andin Hinduism, the elephant-headed *deva*, Ganesh is associated with *buddhi* or wisdom (Rocher, 1991, p. 74). They may also be referring to the commonly circulated adage that 'elephants never forget' which connotes intelligence and wisdom.
A number of different words were used by followers to describe elderly elephant Somchai that are indicative of the respect that they have for him. A few people described him as 'majestic' or 'regal' and another extended the royal metaphor by comparing him to the greatness of kings. The royal metaphor perhaps originates in the historical relationship between elephants and kingship which is explored by Trautmann (2015). Other adjectives to describe Somchai included 'graceful', 'magnificent', 'beautiful', 'wise' and 'handsome'. Following her death, words used by followers to describe Naiyana included 'majestic', 'magnificent', 'precious', 'sweet', and 'beautiful'. Words used to describe Somporn included 'great bull', 'beautiful', 'grand', 'wonderful', 'friend', 'majestic spirit', 'handsome', 'warrior bull', 'wise' and 'darling'. In selecting these adjectives, commenters may also draw on existing vocabularies for describing elephants that have been employed in other contexts

such as wildlife documentaries and novels. Some also believed Somporn to be capable of love, forgiveness and compassion. One person believed that he adored the people at the sanctuary and another commented that his family was both elephant and human.

Evidence from this study reveals perceptions of elephants as being moral, empathetic and mysterious which bears some resemblance to Keil's description of elephants as "more-than-animal". Keil (2017, p. 196) writes: "On the odd occasion, wild elephants in rural Assam, Northeast India, reveal themselves to be more-than-animal. For people living on the fringes of the forest, they are god-like creatures with supernatural powers of perception, able to grasp the hidden intentions and moral character of people." Examples of comments that indicate a perception of elephants as being morally or emotionally superior to humans appear at the time of rescues. One person suggested that humans could learn a lesson from Duanphen about letting go of the past, and on another post about the integration of a new arrival, someone commented that they wished that humans looked after each other the way that elephants do.

On a related point, it is also noteworthy that while Western thought may have been guilty of believing in human exceptionalism - the human participants in this study perhaps reveal a somewhat more sceptical view of the human. At the same time as considering elephants as better-than-human, some are critical of humans for the hardships that elephants have endured because of humans which may manifest as anger[39] towards other humans. As an example, some commenters expressed disdain for other people for the way that Naiyana had been treated before coming to the sanctuary. Relating this discussion back to the concept of assemblages and *becomings*, we can learn about being human, and the personhood of non-humans, through their role in the assemblage of the sanctuary but it also reveals that humans make judgements about other humans on the basis of their relationships with other organisms. For example, a *becoming* of mahout and elephant through one assemblage may conflict with the *becoming* of an elephant and a welfare activist in another assemblage and these assemblages and *becomings* may exist simultaneously - particularly where it is possible for at least one of them to exist predominantly in a virtual space.

[39] Anger is felt where an action or crime takes place, and an evaluation is made that the subject did not deserve it and the perpetrator's action is unjustified (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000, p. 331).

Some commenters draw comparisons between the experiences of elephants and those of people. In the case of the arrivals of new rescues, for example, people feel empathy for new elephants trying to make friends and draw comparisons to human experiences of being new to a group. Some commenters compared Duanphen's first days at the sanctuary and early interactions with other elephants to human experiences. A commenter who identified themselves as a parent, compared watching the events on Facebook to watching their children on the first day of school. This does not necessarily suggest human-like behaviour on the part of the elephants, but rather that the commenter's emotional response was as if elephants were human. Another example is noting the similarities between human and elephant life spans though, more often than not, commenters do not make additional inferences based on this observation. One commenter, for example, noted that she was the same age as Duanphen. In doing so, she did not make a comparison that attributed Duanphen with human qualities but drew a parallel between her own life and Duanphen's that perhaps reveals a sense of affinity that she has with Duanphen which is a reminder of Locke's (2013, p. 80) argument that bonds between humans and elephants are formed because of such similarities in social conditions.

A practice that is more anthropomorphic in nature than drawing parallels between human and elephant life spans is the attempt by people to give voice to elephants by commenting on what they believe elephants are thinking or feeling in photographs. In one of their Facebook posts, the sanctuary described Duanphen as smiling. A number of people commented on her smile and some pondered what she is smiling about which also suggests that the sanctuary's practice of captioning images allows, or encourages, audiences to make additional commentary and offer their interpretations of images. With only the information provided via Facebook, Duanphen was described by different commenters as 'friendly', 'confident', 'resilient', and 'happy'. One follower shared their belief that you can tell an animal's emotions by looking at them. While this assertion is problematic from an academic point of view, it cannot simply be dismissed for two reasons. Firstly, while this observer cannot know for sure if animals experience the emotions they have ascribed them, they also may not be wrong in their assessment. Secondly, it may not be crucial to

the production of meaning for the observer that the emotion of animals be scientifically proven as the meaning is created by their perceptions.

A growing body of research across a range of disciplines is shifting away from dismissing perceptions of animals as emotional beings as mere anthropomorphism. de Waal (1997) has coined the term "anthropodenial" to describe a neglect for considering the ways in which animals might be similar to humans in terms of having emotions and acting with intent.

Scholars have also argued more broadly for animals as emotional beings. The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness, which outlines the physiological reasons why animals are capable of experiencing emotion was written relatively recently (Low, 2012); Bekoff (2000), draws on observations from a number of different species to illustrate a range of animal emotions from grief to embarrassment and arguing further in a later publication that: "It's bad biology to argue against the existence of animal emotions" (Bekoff, 2007, p. xviii); and Ben-Ze'ev (2000, p. 162) advocates the rejection of 17th Century Enlightenment thinker, Descartes', notion of animals as devoid of emotion "by ethological research as well as by commonsense observations..." . Also from the perspective of the discipline of psychology, Midgley (1994, p. 43) argues that psychologists' definitions of animals has overlooked the knowledge of people who work with 'demanding animals' such as elephants and this is an area of research that is now being explored in the area of human-elephant relations. Klixbull (2016, p. 216), for example, presents the view that while a tendency to anthropomorphise non-human subjects has been criticised in scientific research, his mahout subjects in an elephant tourism enterprise in Sri Lanka were not bound by such rules. He observed that the mahouts "...consider their elephants as fellow social beings who can feel, think, and emote, making them sufficiently similar to humans to develop intimate, reciprocating social relationships with them." Similarly, I would argue that the use of the terms anthropomorphism or anthropomorphic should not be taken as a criticism of people commenting on the sanctuary's Facebook posts. This is, after all, not only a study of their feelings and attitudes, but also one that recognizes elephants as an animal we now know with much greater scientific certainty shares emotional capacities to some extent. There is an emerging body of research that demonstrates cognitive and emotional states in Asian elephants for example, Plotnik, de Waal, and Reiss' (2006) study of elephant self-recognition using the mirror test and Plotnik & de Waal's (2014) study of

consoling behaviour amongst elephants where there is an experience of distress.[40] While it may be considered anthropomorphic to imagine the conversations taking place between elephants, scientific research such as these experiments confirm that elephants are self-aware, emotional, and communicative beings. Earlier research has also argued for elephants as having autonoetic consciousness (Varner, 2008), and a psychology that can be studied in terms of human psychology (Bradshaw, 2009). Locke (2017a) provides a detailed description of discovering the personhood of elephant informants in his apprenticeship as an elephant handler in Nepal and presents a novel argument for nonhuman informants in multi-species ethnography. It has to be noted, however, that these perspectives are not universally accepted. A contrasting example can be found in ecologist, Paul Manger's, view that 'elephants are elephants, not big grey humans' (cited in Wylie, 2008, p.180).

It is noteworthy that the sanctuary's Facebook commenters draw some comparison between human and elephant behaviour for humorous effect for example, describing elephants as 'pole-dancing' when scratching on trees. In other contexts, elements of anthropomorphism are perhaps responsible for the range of experiences of elephants in Thailand. Anthropomorphic tendencies can be responsible for poor animal welfare (Serpell, 2002, p. 437) and this can be seen in Cohen's (2009) suggestion discussed in the introduction that the popularity of performing elephant shows comes from the humour of the apparent humanisation of the elephants and their ability to be trained to mimic human behaviours. On the other hand, perceiving elephants as being human-like and experiencing human-like emotion may be an important factor in driving a desire to improve elephant welfare. Plous (1993, p. 32) describes the 'Similarity Principle' in which "people are more willing to help similar others, more attentive to the pain and suffering of those who are similar, more attracted to similar others...". An argument could be made that in recognising the personhood of elephants, the exploitation through having them mimic human behaviours for entertainment becomes more evident.

This chapter has outlined a number of examples of events and stories shared by the sanctuary on Facebook, and looked at how other Facebook users have responded to these posts. From observation of interactions on Facebook, it is

[40] When the Trio have their medical treatments each day, they also show signs of consoling behaviour which can be observed by guests.

possible to describe practices and beliefs that place individual elephants as the subjects of rites-of-passage and funeral rites, to explore expressions of grief for deceased elephants, and view active participation in rescuing and celebrating new elephants at the sanctuary. The subject of care for elephants regularly recurs as people contribute to veterinary care or make suggestions for possible treatments. It is possible to reveal attitudes about elephant welfare in Thailand as well as beliefs about elephants as being animal, more-than-animal, and better-than-human.

Conclusion

The goal of this research project has been to study the intersections of a an elephant sanctuary with an alternative elephant tourism component and their elephant keeping philosophy, with guest encounters and Facebook engagement with, information and narratives about the sanctuary's elephants. From this study which has employed multiple methods and multiple sites, and drawn on a number of disciplines, it becomes possible to begin to understand the relationships that exist between the sanctuary, the elephants in their care, their guests, and their Facebook supporters. To conclude this study I argue that the sanctuary at the centre of this study is much more complex than typical definitions of sanctuary suggest and that sanctuary can be both physical and virtual. It can be both a place and something that one 'has'. The evidence presented in the previous chapters permits the conceptualisation of the sanctuary as an entity that transcends the physical boundaries of the forested land that homes the elephants in Thailand and is also a virtual sanctuary for people.

The forms that constitute the sanctuary as a physical and virtual space are as diverse as elephants and other animals at the sanctuary, people at the sanctuary, their Facebook followers, their visitors, other elephant-keeping people, communications technology (including the functionality built into Facebook), a camera, transport and tourism infrastructure, and the intangible forms of stories, affect and emotion. Many combinations of these forms have the potential to create 'contact zones' (Haraway, 2008, p. 215) - spaces that in this case can be physical, virtual or abstract in which meaning can be formed and in which humans and non-humans can affect and be affected. This means that the sanctuary can be conceptualised as a series of *assemblages ,*to come back to the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), where forms, connections, and meanings are fluid and changing.

This project introduces the roles that the sanctuary, the elephants, and the sanctuary's networked community of supporters play in shaping each others' lives in physical and virtual spaces through exchanging feelings, sentiments, narratives, and financial contributions, situating the sanctuary as a site of an affect economy, and as a competitor in the attention economy. These exchanges demonstrate the affective power of narratives in both the context of volunteer tourism and in virtual space.

Narratives generate emotional engagement, strengthen ties in the network, and mobilise resources such as financial and moral support. It is also evident that the operating model of the sanctuary fosters these narratives and network ties by recognising the agency of elephants as sentient individuals with their own life-stories and personhood.

What is the Sanctuary?

One evening after a hot and busy day, Elizabeth pondered what people think when they hear the word 'sanctuary' given how much happens in a day. In the preceding chapters, 'the sanctuary' has been used interchangeably to describe the physical location and online representation of the sanctuary. So what is it really? OxfordDictionaries.com (2017) defines 'sanctuary' as "Refuge or safety from pursuit, persecution, or other danger", "A nature reserve", "A place where injured or unwanted animals of a specified kind are cared for", and "A holy place; a temple".

As a physical location the sanctuary provides a safe place for elephants that have previously been employed in industries such as tourism and logging. The values and practices of the sanctuary are continuously reinforced through Facebook posts and Facebook followers contribute their own observations of practices that define the organisation as a sanctuary for elephants. From Facebook comments posted by supporters it is possible to deduce that their understanding of sanctuary for elephants means a place where animals feel love/are loved, are safe, have freedom to make their own choices and to exhibit behaviours such as scratching and playing, are able to socialise with other elephants, and can have a dignified and peaceful death. For many commenters, seeing the elephants make their own choices is very important and they have emotional responses to elephants having freedom. At the time of Duanphen's rescue, for example, commenters observed behaviour that they believed indicated that Duanphen was making her own choices and exploring. A picture of her throwing dirt over herself while seemingly smiling attracted a comparatively high number of likes, and images of the new arrival scratching attracted comments that suggest people see this behaviour as being representative of newly-found freedom. Another sentiment that appears at the time of rescue is the notion of sanctuary as a place where elephants learn what it can be to be an elephant which also suggests that elephants with some freedom are perceived as

being 'more elephant' than their working counterparts because of their ability to fulfil their true elephant natures as opposed to having this distorted by conditions of service to humans. There is a sense from the sanctuary's Facebook following that people perceive the process of rescuing elephants as giving them back agency and dignity that had been wrongfully taken from them in their careers working for people.

Some comments affirm that commonly held definition of sanctuary as a place of safety, and in a post about elderly tusker Somchai, two followers mention that he is safe at the sanctuary with one noting that he will not be poached for his tusks. Related to this, it was meaningful for a number of commenters that Naiyana and Somporn were able to die of old age rather than because of harm done to them.

The sanctuary however, is more than a protected place for the care of elephants. It also exists in a virtual space where, it can be argued, it is a sanctuary for people. The strongest examples of this come from the comments about Duanphen's rescue and early days at the sanctuary which revealed an emotional reliance that some followers have on the sanctuary. One commenter described having just seen an upsetting article about a circus elephant and felt relief at being able to read a happy story about an elephant. Someone else wrote that whenever they are experiencing misfortune, the sanctuary reminds them of the goodness in the world. Another commented that the sanctuary's rescue stories restore their faith in people. Previously I have mentioned Elizabeth's intention to keep the tone of the sanctuary's Facebook page positive and these examples show the effect that this positivity has on some of their Facebook followers and followers perpetuate positivity through their participation which goes beyond a concern for, or love of elephants.

It could be argued that navigating to the virtual site of the sanctuary, or stopping to engage with one of the sanctuary's post on a followers' newsfeed is a form of vicarious micro volunteer tourism. In both physical travel and virtual travel, people 'take a break' to engage in a leisure activity that involves interacting with beings, or representations of beings, that are 'better-than-human'.

Further evidence of the sanctuary's Facebook page as a virtual retreat for people is the noticeable lack of trolling behaviour or intense debate. The behaviour observed in this sample did not indicate any intentional courting of controversy or deliberate seeking out of confrontation. In one example, Elizabeth had noticed a comment on Facebook from someone who described a performing baby elephant

which was at odds with the values held by Elizabeth and the sanctuary who do not condone performing elephants. It is rare for someone to comment on a post on the sanctuary's page without being familiar with the values of the sanctuary but despite the seeming incongruity of this comment, there was no response or backlash from followers of the sanctuary indicating both that the sanctuary does not appear to censor comments on their posts and that their Facebook page is not seen by others as place for influencing others to change their opinions. This is notwithstanding my earlier argument that followers of the sanctuary do make judgements about other humans and their treatment of elephants. It is also not withstanding the discussion in chapter 4 about Elizabeth selecting what is shared online to ensure that information is not misconstrued or scrutinised by people with strong (but perhaps misinformed) opinions.

As a virtual space, the sanctuary is also a representation of the values held by some followers and a window through which they can make contributions towards, and see the enacting of, those values which contributes to the sanctuary's success a physical space for elephants.

Networked Community

Some comments from the sanctuary's Facebook followers indicate that they are aware that they are part of a global network of people with a shared interest in elephants and similar values around elephant welfare who engage in collective action to support the sanctuary. For a number of people, individual elephants are not just objects of concern for the networked community, but are also active members of the networked community. For example, at the time of Naiyana's death one follower described her as a friend of elephant lovers around the world. Someone else commented when Somporn died that he had the love of his family at the sanctuary, and of his friends on Facebook. These comments suggest that not only were Naiyana and Somporn active participant in their (global) network but that they were peers suggesting recognition of their personhood. These examples also demonstrate Naiyana and Somporn's roles as cosmopolitan animals (Barua, 2014).

On a few occasions, people have left comments on the sanctuary's Facebook posts that speak on behalf of the wider network of Facebook supporters and it is plausible that a sense of belonging to the sanctuary's networked community

is a personal benefit that followers gain from supporting the sanctuary. Examples from the comments on Somporn's death include one person who stated that they all love and admire the sanctuary. Another commented that everyone who visits the Facebook page shares in their grief, and one person commented that they are unlikely to get the chance to visit the sanctuary but wanted them to know they are with the other 'unseen' followers supporting them. For some followers, participation in the sanctuary's network also gives them a sense of shared ownership, or guardianship, of the elephants. In one comment, for example, the commenter describes Charoen as 'our baby' and on a post about Duanphen's rescue, one person described looking forward to 'our' elephant arriving home.

The role of the networked-community that supports and constitutes the elephant sanctuary is multi-faceted. Its members provide moral support and encouragement. Through expressing their gratitude, they endorse the work carried out by the sanctuary and reinforce the value of the work beyond the physical locale of the sanctuary. They share in a range of emotions including grief, relief, joy, and happiness. They both empathise with the emotions shared by the sanctuary and share their individual emotional responses to events at the sanctuary, and they provide crucial financial support demonstrated in the fundraising campaign for Duanphen and Pakpao.

Members of the network seek information about individual elephants and elephants in general by asking questions in comments sections, and they share information within the network and in their extended Facebook network by answering each others' questions and sharing the sanctuary's posts in their wider networks. As well as sharing knowledge, these shares and posts might also be regarded as affective transactions. There are indications that there are members of this network who are also members of other elephant-related networks. This suggests that members may play a role in placing the sanctuary in the context of wider discussions about elephant welfare.

A number of supporters consider being given the opportunity to help, to have their values represented, and to share in feeling as benefits of being part of the network. This is evidenced by those that are thankful for being able to contribute and those that thank the sanctuary for sharing their emotions indicating a sense of privilege at being included in the personal emotional experiences of the sanctuary and Elizabeth in particular. This also generates a sense of belonging through

participation in the affective economy of the virtual site of the sanctuary. In return for their contributions, Elizabeth regards the act of posting as an act of showing gratitude to supporters. This relates to the discussion on gifts as the sanctuary's Facebook posts become digital artefacts that could be received by some as gifts which convey meaning and affirm a sense of belonging.

Stories and Elephant Biographies

> "People love a good story. A good story can be intriguingly informative, a good story can well up deep emotions and a good story can carry culture, history and tradition..... Stories are important to people, are one of the most important forms of verbal and written communication. People learn about each other through storytelling, solve problems by telling stories and pass on their most important insights about the world through stories. A good story can persuade masses to follow an ideal, or an individual to join a cause." (Mahoney, 2015)

The role of stories about elephants in creating emotion and a sense of engagement with the sanctuary is crucial, as this thesis has demonstrated and strongly point to the sanctuary as a site of an affect economy. The role of stories that create emotional responses has been observed in the context of generating engagement in conservation by Jane Goodall who says: "With storytelling, you have to get to people's hearts. It's not about engaging them intellectually" (cited by Shea, 2015). This suggests that creating narratives that engage people emotionally is important in both the affect and attention economies that the sanctuary participates in. The stories of animals at the sanctuary are shared freely with guests who visit in person, and on Facebook and it is significant that the sanctuary's elephant management style means that stories are often generated by the elephants' choices, actions and personalities. These are then interpreted and elaborated on by the sanctuary and their supporters. Guests to the physical site of the sanctuary, and Facebook supporters are also invited to become part of the animals' stories and once such example of a guest becoming part of a story was Laura's experience of meeting two elephants who may be moved to the sanctuary. The stories shared by the sanctuary create engagement and a sense of involvement for supporters by, as one commenter puts it, allowing people to see 'behind the scenes' and this is was also

true of field work experiences. Guests at the sanctuary are not just involved in the day-to-day activities of the sanctuary but are given a position of privilege by being included in important events such as being 'let-in' on news of upcoming rescues or being invited to meet elephants that might be moved to the sanctuary.

The stories told in the sanctuary and online via Facebook, as well as the narratives created by members of the network, also create of a picture of a group of elephants whose individual members have their own life-stories. The sanctuary's posts and stories about elephants are almost always about individual elephants and the data reviewed in this study reveals that a number of people are curious about the life stories of elephants. Perceptions of elephants as individuals with life stories is also increasingly being attended to by academics. Observing working elephants Baker (2016, p. 130) writes: "like any hired assistants, they possessed their own upbringing, education, personality, and temperament...it seems right to understand these elephants as 'strange persons' or 'other-than-human-persons'". Münster (2016, p. 295) argues that regarding elephants as individuals is key to resolving human-elephant conflict in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. Locke (2016, pp. 162-163) writes that historically in Nepal, the suitability of elephants for certain tasks or roles was decided based on their individual characteristics, and Klixbull (2016, p. 222) has documented farmers' encounters with wild elephants in Sri Lanka in which farmers understand elephants as distinct individuals.

The compiling of historical elephant biographies has been discussed before by Nance (2013, p. 6) as an enterprise to "...convey nostalgia that reflects the showmanship and marketing messages the circuses themselves offered" rather than to accurately record the details of an elephant's life. Embellished elephant biographies were used by circus press agents as marketing material and picked up by media (Nance, 2013, p. 16) - a practice that dates from an era before Western science had started to consider the possibility that animals might share elements of personhood with humans.

Here I also argue that Igor Kopytoff's' Cultural Biography of Things' (1986) can be drawn on to inform how the biography of a tamed Thai Elephant might be written. In constructing a biography of a thing (by which Kopytoff does not simply mean an inanimate object but, rather an attitude towards something or its commoditization) he suggests seeking answers to questions about its career, status, life stages, changes of use, and what happens when it is no longer useful (Kopytoff,

1986, p. 67). The opposite of commoditization is singularization in which items are 'pulled out' of circulation, or by which their commoditization is somehow limited while retaining exchange value or some other type of worth (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 76). When an elephant is purchased by the sanctuary, the network of supporters does not necessarily view this as an elephant being bought but rather their freedom. They contribute to a 'rescue' rather than a 'purchase'. Regarding elephants as property is at odds with the values held by the sanctuary, and also likely the values held by a large number of their followers, and an elephant's 'rescue' by the sanctuary is emancipation from the condition of being 'owned'. While they contribute to the economic value of the elephants by donating funds, it appears that they do so because of the intrinsic value, that they believe the elephant has. The sanctuary also takes the elephant out of circulation by not on-selling the elephants and by seeking confirmation from the seller that the funds used to purchase the elephant will not be used for further purchases of working elephants. The elephants continue, however, to have value in the affect economy and retain earning capacity through their role in an affect economy in which their care is dependent on volunteer tourism and charitable donations. This can be related to the retention by the elephants of their "encounter value" (Barua, 2016) and "non-use value" (Swain, 2004) described in the introduction.

Kopytoff's system of classification of commodities could perhaps be drawn as a spectrum, along which tamed elephants in Thailand move throughout their lives and through these changes of a status, a biography may be formed or, perhaps it is a venn diagram where an elephant can be simultaneously commoditized and singularized - where their intrinsic value becomes more important than their exchange value and this change of status of value is marked symbolically by the sanctuary through their traditions such as the welcome buffet.

Foster's (2012) term 'Networked Biography' can also be used to describe the biography of a tamed Asian elephant because, to write the biography of tamed elephant, we have to write the role of the humans in their history - and in so doing, we learn about members of our own species. As Fudge (2002b, pp. 5-6) remarks, in piecing together the stories of non-human animals, we also piece together stories about human attitudes. The concept of networked biographies is also closely tied with multispecies ethnography. Marcus (1995, p. 109) argues that life stories form a type of ethnographic narrative. If we accept this premise, then it follows that a

networked biography of an elephant can present us with a multispecies ethnographic narrative in which the life stories of elephants and humans intersect.

Emotional Engagement

Bekoff writes: "It's because animals have emotions that we're so drawn to them; lacking shared language, emotions are perhaps our most effective means of cross-species communication. We can share our emotions, we can understand the language of feelings, and that's been why we form deep and enduring social bonds with many other beings. Emotions are the glue that binds." (Bekoff, 2007, p. 15).

There are some indications that people see themselves as having shared emotional experiences with the elephants, for example, on a post about Pakpao's rescue, one person notes that the sanctuary brings happiness to people as well as elephants and this perception of sharing positive emotions with and towards elephants also emphasises the role of the Facebook page as a virtual sanctuary for people. People possibly also feel an emotional engagement with elephants because they perceive the elephants as being emotionally engaged. However, the majority of people expressing emotions online and forming emotional bonds, are not interpreting the elephants' emotions from a first-hand encounter but are reading the accounts of people who are with the elephants, viewing images and videos, and creating their own understandings. They are not necessarily responding to elephants, but the sanctuary's representations of elephants mediated through communication technology.

While elephants are regarded as emotional beings, the guests at the sanctuary and Facebook followers in this sample do not require the elephants to reciprocate the feelings that they have for them. In the field, guests were more engaged with elephants that responded to their presence but as some guests noted, this was not a requirement for them to want to help elephants, and there was no expectation of the elephants that they would want to interact but rather guests responded positively when elephants chose to be around them - a choice that was made more apparent by the choices of some elephants not to interact with guests. This also highlighted the rights of sanctuary's elephants to respond as individuals to the presence of guests. Of the supporters online, it is obvious that they do not expect the elephants to reciprocate their feelings. It is simply enough that they believe that

elephants have feelings and that their contributions to the sanctuary lead to positive feelings for the elephant.

In encountering elephants either in person or in stories told online, people have emotional responses and in some cases create the narrative that produces those emotions. Despret (2004, p. 127) writes: "We produce emotion and it produces us." which might be used to describe the scenarios in which the sanctuary's Facebook followers are engaged with, and are affected by, the emotions generated through their interactions and own imaginations. The experience of emotions can lead to becoming *invested* (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12) and this emotional investment leads to support for the sanctuary in the form of moral support, monetary donations, or visits to the physical location of the sanctuary to undertake custodial labour.

Through the telling of stories (including through photographs, videos, and symbolism), and the sharing of emotions, the sanctuary also engages in affective labour which Ditmore (2007, p. 171) defines as "work that aims to evoke specific behaviours or sentiments in others as well as oneself". In some industries, affective or emotional labour includes deliberate manipulation of emotions (Hardt, 2007; Hochschild, 1983; Staples, 2007). Hochschild (1983) for example, describes the deliberate production of emotion by airline staff in customer services roles. However, Solomon (1998, p. 11) points out that employing an emotion for a particular purpose does not necessarily mean that the emotion is not genuine or that employment of the emotion is even conscious. As the data presented in this thesis shows, the affect economy in the context of the sanctuary is not one-sided and is co-produced by the sanctuary's followers. The simplest examples of this come from comments from some of the sanctuary's followers throughout this study that indicate that they want to be emotionally engaged, even when the emotions are negative such as grieving.

In the case-study I have presented here, there is also evidence that Facebook facilitates the social sharing of emotions described by Frijda and Mesquita (1994, p. 80) as people sharing their emotions with others who in turn have an emotional response and join in what become collective expressions of emotions such as happiness or grief.

Implications for Future Research

Sensory Ethnography

Data gathered during this study has revealed another possibility for the study of human-elephant relations in tourism settings - that of *sensory ethnography* - the study of senses for understanding experiences and memory (Pink, 2009). Visiting the sanctuary in person creates opportunities for a number of sensory experiences that may contribute to the creation of affect and emotion suggesting that there may be more to be understood about this aspect of the encounter. On one day Natalie shared that she loves the smell of elephants and others in the conversation agreed that elephants have a smell but it is not a strong scent like with some animals. In encounters initiated by the Trio it is sometimes possible to touch them and feel the texture of their skin which may be particularly important for the creation of affect as Parreñas (2012, p. 675) notes: "When it comes to beings that do not speak, feeling and touching are crucial forms of transspecific connection". Locke (2017a) also writes about the sensation of feeling an elephants skin as part of the sensory experience of forming an affective relationship with an elephant. Another sensory experience for visitors to the sanctuary is that of climate. Fieldwork was conducted when it was hot and humid with thunder storms some evenings. While all groups of guests expressed a desire to return to the sanctuary, some noted that they would choose a different time of year with a more comfortable climate for a future visit. There are also a variety of elephant vocalisations that can be heard. On one particular morning walk with the Trio during Group Bs visit they were more vocal than usual. Ubon was trumpeting and Kanda was making squeaking sounds. They also tapped their trunks on the ground making a hollow sound which previous guests, Laura and Mary, had dubbed 'drumming'. Guests took photographs and video footage of the elephants in order to preserve memories of their experiences. At lunch one day Amanda was reviewing her photos from the morning walk. She and Timothy have a large collage of photos of elephants from their previous trip to Kenya in their living room at home and they were talking about creating another canvas from the visit to the sanctuary. In another example, Group C took video footage while watching Charoen's family group playing in the in the river because there was vocalising from the elephants that they wanted to capture.

The possibilities for exploring a sensory ethnography can also be seen in Facebook interactions. Photographs are frequently used by the sanctuary to tell stories online and some images take on special meaning. For example, a professional photograph of Naiyana is mentioned in three different comments by people for

whom it has significance and is tied to emotional events, demonstrating also, the role of images in creating a feeling of nostalgia. Video is particularly important in the online environment and there is some evidence that followers have stronger affective responses when they can hear elephants and see movements, as opposed to still photographs. For example, in response to one video, a follower commented that with longer videos, they close their eyes and pretend that are at the sanctuary. When videos with audible elephant vocalisations are posted, these attract comments such as enjoyment of hearing the sound of elephants trumpeting. The senses that can be experienced through Facebook are, however, limited and mediated, and one possibility is that the desire to visit the sanctuary that is expressed in a number of comments by Facebook followers is indicative of a desire for a fuller sensory experience that includes smell and touch.

Research Design Possibilities

Another advantage of posting videos on Facebook is a glimpse into the size of a audience that might not otherwise be seen. People may read Facebook posts without leaving a sign of their presence such as a 'like', comment, or 'share'. With videos, on the other hand, the number of views of the video is recorded in a publicly visible way giving a clearer indication of the reach of the content. While Facebook provides one way of 'seeing' the network, there is almost certainly much more that is unseen. It is only possible to observe behaviour of people who actively participate online but this does not mean that others do not *engage* with material they view on Facebook (McPherson, 2015, p. 137). It is not possible to observe donations made anonymously, communications sent by email, posts that are viewed, and emotions that are felt or attitudes that are formed but are not publicly shared and may inform future behaviours. Furthermore, for some people, participation in the network might be temporary. Experiences at the sanctuary have not led to visible further action on Facebook from all of the fieldwork participants and so we cannot know whether they have continued to engage with the sanctuary or with elephant welfare concerns more broadly. As the data collected from Facebook only covers the period immediately following fieldwork research, it also does not indicate whether Facebook participation for the four guests who did post visible comments online following their stay have maintained their level of interaction over a longer period of time.

K. Smith and Holmes (2009, p. 414) noted that research in volunteer tourism has been largely dominated by single-case studies with short term field work creating "snap shots" rather than comparative studies across organisations, arguing that there is a need for greater representation of the organisational perspective. While this project seeks to represent both an organisational perspective as well as the wider networked community surrounding the organisation, it too is restricted to a "snap-shot" of a single case study. A greater contribution to the existing research would be to extend the length of the study to include a larger sample and incorporate into the research design, the ability to follow-up with participants to discuss their ongoing engagement through Facebook, or other means. Conducting interviews or surveys sometime after the sanctuary experience could reveal useful information about the impact of memories of encounters (see for example, Curtin, 2010). This would be well complemented by a study that recruited participants from Facebook and elaborated on the emotions and opinions that they share, and followed up with them about their "in person" elephant encounters. A comparative study of other elephant-keeping organisations or alternative tourism operations offering encounters with charismatic megafauna may also help develop a better understanding of how tourism models and Facebook use can shape meaningful encounters and create engagement in animal welfare issues. A comparative study would also test the validity of the themes identified in this study. This project would have benefited from a longer period of fieldwork to develop more in depth research questions as well as a more comprehensive coding system for the analysis of Facebook participation.

This project set out to discover the intersections between alternative elephant tourism, use of social media, and creating engagement in elephant life-stories and welfare concerns. In doing so it has drawn on existing research and thinking from a number of disciplines, and collected data from two distinct places - the physical location of the sanctuary, and the sanctuary's Facebook page. In being multi-disciplinary, multi-sited, multi-method, and multi-species in approach, it has allowed for the forming of a long-shot view of the sanctuary as more than a safe physical space for elephants but also a virtual space in which stories, ideas, gifts, and emotions are shared, and most significantly, in which elephants and humans shape each others' lives.

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Appendix 1

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants

Samantha Eason
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email: samantha.eason@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Project: Alternative Elephant Tourism and Social Media in Thailand.

This research is being conducted by Samantha Eason to investigate how an alternative tourism setting and social media interactions build a community of supporters for their elephants and their future goals.

The research involves semi-structured interviews, observing and participating in activities in the sanctuary, and on the sanctuary's public Facebook page. You will be invited to share your thoughts, opinions and experiences in a conversation-style interview of approximately 30-40 minutes, and throughout your stay in the sanctuary. Your interactions with the elephants and other people will be observed. After your stay at the sanctuary, your interactions with the sanctuary's public Facebook page will be observed and may be quoted in the thesis. Photos of sanctuary activities may also be taken.

Participation is voluntary. You will have an opportunity to review transcripts, field notes and photos related to your participation. You have the right to withdraw your participation and any data you have contributed until 31 December 2015. There is no penalty for withdrawing your participation.

The results of the project may be published but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in the investigation: Your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, you will be given a pseudonym in the published thesis and no other identifying information will be revealed. Any photographs taken will be blurred to ensure that participants cannot be identified. All data will be stored in secure locations or on password protected electronic devices. The data will only be accessible to the researcher and will be destroyed after 5 years. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC library. The research may also be used in other academic publications.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for the Master of Arts of Samantha Eason under the supervision of Dr. Piers Locke who can be contacted at piers.locke@canterbury.ac.nz. He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return to the researcher.

Samantha Eason
samantha.eason@canterbury.ac.nz
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UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Consent Form for Participants

Project: Alternative Elephant Tourism and Social Media in Thailand.

Please tick the box next to each statement as applicable.

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time up until 31 December 2015 without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that the thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that care will be taken to keep data collected for the study in locked and secure facilities and/or in a password protected electronic form, and the data will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I agree to interviews being audio-recorded and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that photographs may be taken but will be blurred to ensure that I am not able to be identified.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I am able to receive a copy of the finished thesis by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher, Samantha Eason (samantha.eason@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or her supervisor, Dr Piers Locke (piers.locke@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information. Furthermore, if Have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

---------- ---------- ----------

name signature date

Thank you for returning your consent form to me.

Samantha Eason

Appendix 2

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Industry Experts

Samantha Eason
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UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
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INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS (Experts)

Project: Alternative Elephant Tourism and Social Media in Thailand.

This research is being conducted by Samantha Eason to investigate how an alternative tourism setting and social media interactions build a community of supporters for their elephants and their future goals.

The research adopts a participant-observation methodology and involves semi-structured interviews, observing and participating in activities in an elephant sanctuary. You are invited to share your thoughts, opinions and experiences in a conversation-style interview of approximately 30-40 minutes.

Participation is voluntary. You will have an opportunity to review transcripts, field notes and photos related to your participation. You have the right to withdraw your participation and any data you have contributed until 31 December 2015. There is no penalty for withdrawing your participation.

The results of the project may be published and on the consent form, you determine whether your real name may be used in publications arising from the research or if a pseudonym is used. All data will be stored in secure locations or on password protected electronic devices. The data will only be accessible to the researcher and will be destroyed after 5 years. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC library. The research may also be used in other academic publications.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for the Master of Arts of Samantha Eason under the supervision of Dr. Piers Locke who can be contacted at piers.locke@canterbury.ac.nz. He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return to the researcher.

Samantha Eason
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UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Consent Form for Participants (Experts)

Project: Alternative Elephant Tourism and Social Media in Thailand.

Please tick the box next to each statement as applicable.

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time up until 31 December 2015 without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that care will be taken to keep data collected in locked and secure facilities and/or in a password protected electronic form, and the data will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I agree to interviews being audio-recorded and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that photographs may be taken but will be blurred to ensure that I am not able to be identified.
- ☐ I understand that the thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library and....
  - ☐ I request that my identity be kept confidential through use of a pseudonym in the published thesis and related publications. **or**
  - ☐ I authorise use of my real name for quotes and contributions

  from my participation in the final thesis and other publications based on this research.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I am able to receive a copy of the finished thesis by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher, Samantha Eason (samantha.eason@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) or her supervisor, Dr Piers Locke (piers.locke@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

---------- ---------- ----------

name signature date

Thank you for returning your consent form to me.
Samantha Eason